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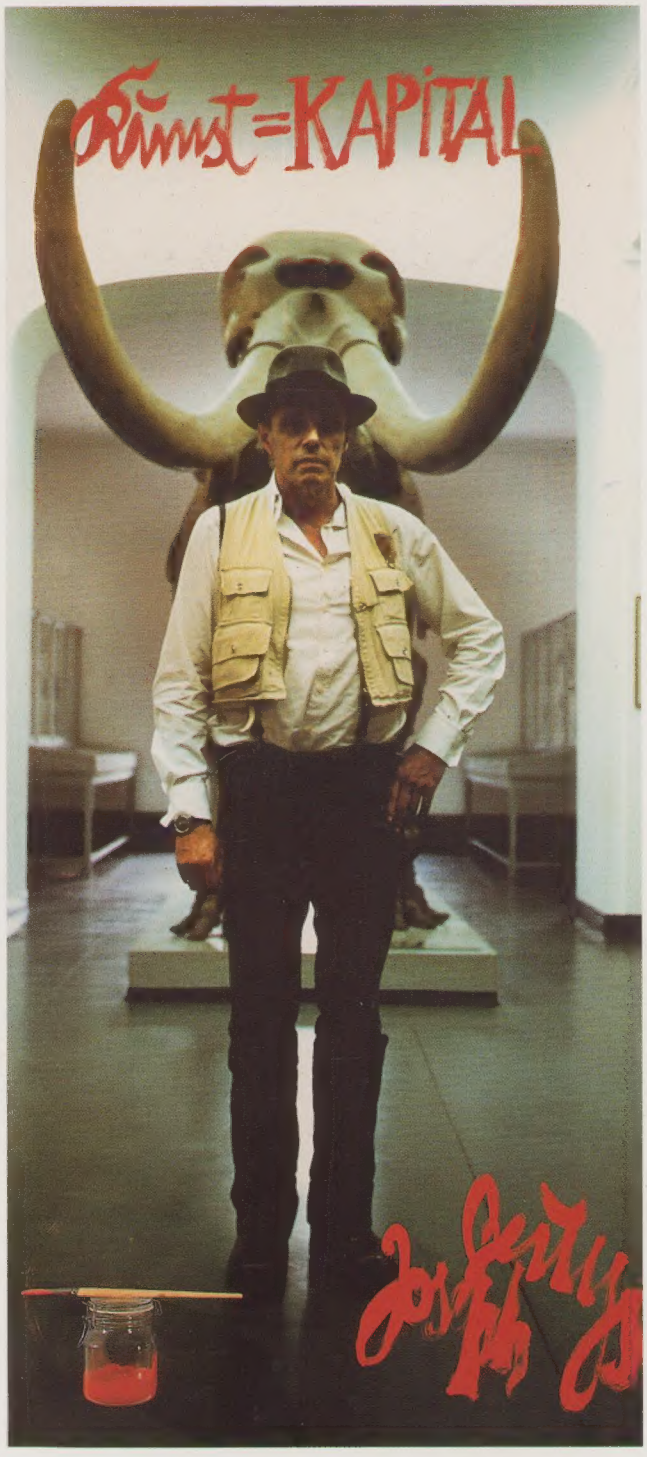

ART AND MONEY

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Ratcliff on the Marriage of Art & Money

Critics & the Marketplace

Art & Money in the Movies

New Art's Prices

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ART & MONEY

Art in America

July 1988

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Vol. 76, No. 7 (July) *Art in America* is published 12 times a year by Brant Art Publications Incorporated, 980 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10021. Telephone (area code 212) 734-9797. Cable address: AMARTMAG. Contents copyright © 1988 by Art in America, and may not be reproduced in any manner or form without permission. ISSN: 0004-3214. The opinions expressed in "Issues & Commentary," apart from the editor's comments, are those of the writers themselves and not necessarily those of this magazine. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or photographs. *Art in America* is indexed in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* and the *Art Index*. Back volumes of *Art in America* are available in microfiche from Bell & Howell, Att. Periodical Department, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, Ohio 44691. Microfilm copies are available through Xerox University Microfilm, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Articles appearing in this magazine are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and/or *America: History and Life* and *RILA*. Circulation is verified by the Audit Bureau of Circulations. Second class postage paid at N.Y., N.Y. and additional mailing offices. **BACK ISSUES AND COMPLETE VOLUMES:** Lawrence McGilvery, P.O. Box 852, La Jolla, Calif. 92038. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** U.S. 12 issues $39.95, 24 issues $69.95, 36 issues $89.95. U.S. Possessions & Canada add $15.00 per year. All others add $20.00 per year. Single copy $4.75 plus postage prepaid. August/Annual $13.50 prepaid (includes $1.50 postage and handling). Domestic newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 250 West 55th St., New York, N.Y. 10019. **CUSTOMER SERVICE:** Art in America, 542 Pacific Ave., Marion, Ohio 43306. Telephone (toll-free) 1-800-624-9200. In Ohio, call (614) 383-3141. **FOR CHANGE OF ADDRESS** send old and new addresses and label from a recent issue. POSTMASTER Send changes of address to Art in America, 542 Pacific Avenue, Marion, Ohio 43306. **TO ORDER A NEW SUBSCRIPTION, CALL TOLL-FREE 1-800-247-2160.**

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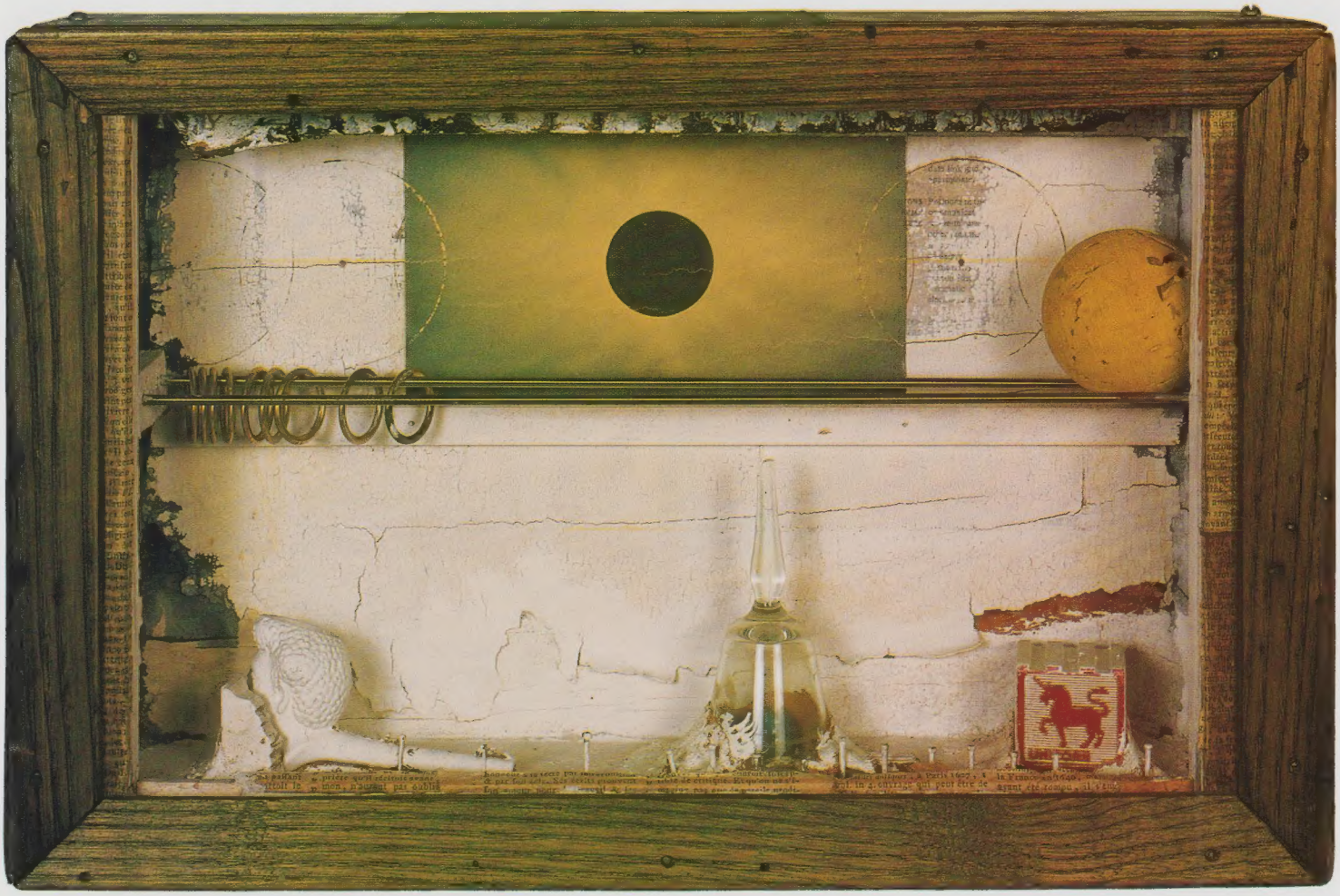

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John Walker, *Untitled*, 1988, monotype, 30" x 22½" Photo: John Schuph

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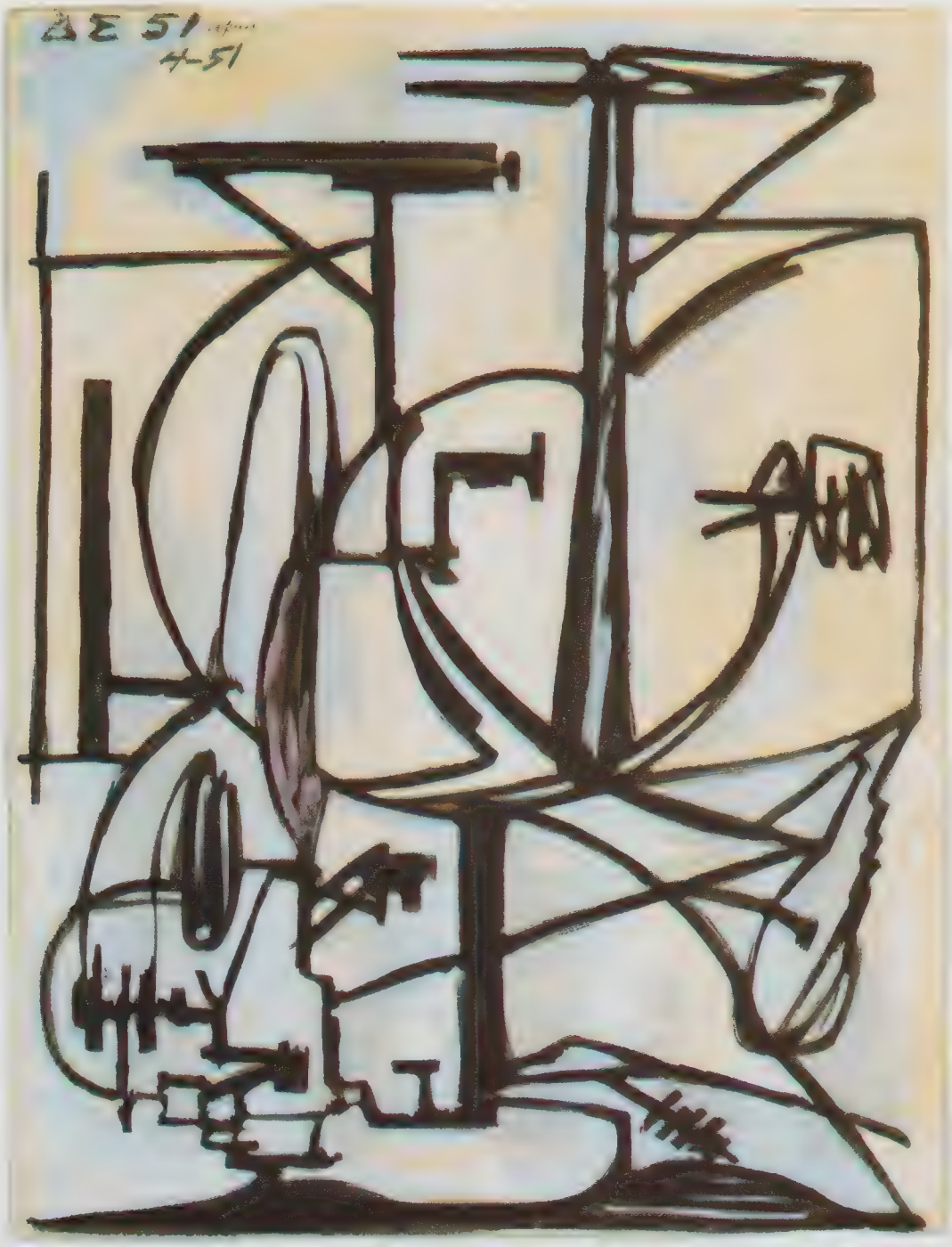

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The Billion Dollar Picture?

What are the cultural implications of today's astronomical auction prices? How much higher will they go? How long can it last? The author comments on the value of extremely expensive art in an age of extreme vulgarity.

BY DOUGLAS DAVIS

We have to get used to another higher level of art prices.

—Thomas Ammann, Zurich art dealer, 1988

All of this would seem to sound the death knell for museum buying, which, except for a few exceptions, has not been competitive with private initiatives for some time.

—Thomas Messer, Director, Guggenheim Museum, 1988

In the history of human culture it is very hard to think of any other behavioral system of comparable elaboration and no apparent practical utility that has ever developed even once.

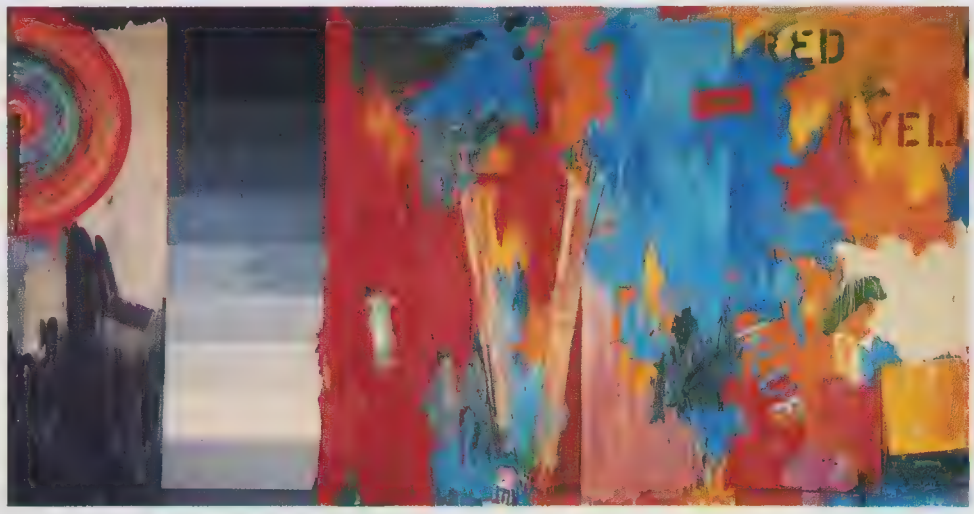
—Joseph Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena*, 1982

When we attend public auctions of art nowadays, it is difficult to decide whether they signify Paradise or Armageddon. The sale of almost any painting, sculpture, photograph, piece of furniture or crockery made or "touched" by an artist of distinction (the infamous Warhol cookie jars, for example) routinely exceeds estimates by two or three times. Buyers and gawkers regularly gasp at the sales, some in horror, some in ecstatic approval. From start to finish, both sides vigorously shake their heads, in vertical or horizontal directions based upon their individual sense of esthetics. When a fanatic Pollock enthusiast sees *Search*, a late, not particularly accomplished painting, fetching $4.8 million, more than twice the price paid by the National Gallery of Australia to Ben Heller in 1973 for *Blue Poles*, a far stronger work, he shakes his head up and down, grinning broadly; all those who disagree perform the horizontal head shake, signaling *"no, no, not that."* When Mark Tansey, a 39-year-old painter with a minimal exhibition record, posts a $190,000 price for a figurative painting freshly made (indeed, the auction catalogue had nothing but a working drawing to reproduce), the home side applauds, while the others groan, deeply. On the evening of May 2, one malcontent had the sad grace to point out that the buyer could have gotten a minor Gainsborough for half of what had just been paid for the Tansey.

It is tempting to assume that these events are simply commercial, without effect upon the larger culture, and particularly upon the community that makes, judges and exhibits the works now fetching one record price after another. But it now appears that the "record" is inseparable from the exchange between art and its public, as is the case throughout virtually all of professional athletics. In the month of May alone in New York City we were treated to record prices for a work of sculpture (of any kind) at auction (Degas's *Little Dancer at 14 Years of Age*); for a work by a living American artist (Jasper Johns's *Diver*); for both Giacometti himself and a 20th-century work of sculpture (his *Large Female Standing II*); for a Franz Kline, a Cy Twombly, a Richard Estes, a Wayne Thiebaud, an Edward Weston photograph, a Man Ray photograph; for a whole string of young artists rarely auctioned before, from Ross Bleckner to Peter Halley to Barbara Kruger; for the cookie jars dispensed at Sotheby's along with hundreds of other mass-produced oddities owned by Warhol; and, finally, for an entire auction of contemporary art, also at Sotheby's, which pulled in $25.9 million for 74 works sold.

In the midst of the most quantitative era in the history of man, when figures are compiled and stored on every aspect of life and love, art has become the dearest of quantities. No quantitative shift of such magnitude can fail to carry qualitative implications. Of course the making and meaning of art is being transformed. The bartering system at Christie's and Sotheby's manipulates artists as well as objects, and with them the curators, critics, historians and journalists who help to define the objects sold. The precious but fragile notion that art is "above" the world, an ideal once nourished in countless poems, classroom lectures and aging textbooks in which art is considered useless and beautiful, like a flower in a field, may be about to crack. This will occur in the world at large, if not back in the more traditional art history departments, where Plato maintains his hold. The first message of this essay is unmistakable: *get ready.*

Nonsense, you will say, particularly if you are a Ph.D. at Harvard or Iowa State, or, more to the point, a fresh-eyed winner of a Guggenheim. How can *Art*, this useless, non-functional commodity, compete quantitatively with the gross society that surrounds it? Consider the following: in the 1980s, the price of art has risen in value to the point where it almost rivals the price of life itself—if not death. Jackson Pollock's *Search* is four to five times as costly as an artificial heart, the installation of which might prolong life at least a few months, and at best several years. Even in the future, when the artificial heart is perfected and offers virtually endless life, the Jackson Pollock will still cost more. If the total value of the May 1988 Sotheby's Contemporary Art Auction is only one-third the cost of the Pentagon building when it was built ($83 million), we must remember the capacity of art to rise rather than hold in value, unlike most architecture and certainly the Pentagon. *Search* alone appreciated 2,400 percent between its sale at auction for $200,000 in 1971 and this year.



Jasper Johns:* Diver, *1962, oil on canvas with mixed mediums, 90 by 170 inches. Courtesy Christie's.

Given artists may fade and even the market itself may rise or fall with the state of the economy. But the art-marketing system is secure. It is anchored in the center, and not on the margins of society.

More than a decade ago, I calculated the rate of increase for *Blue Poles* between 1956, when it sold for $6,000, and 1973, when the Aussies bought it for $2 million ("Toward the Billion Dollar Painting," *Esquire*, Nov. '75). The answer: 50,000 percent. This means that *Poles* will be worth $1 billion by the fall of 1997. Now it just so happens that a B-1 bomber costs precisely $1 billion in 1988, meaning that certain masterpieces, let loose at auction (*Blue Poles*, say) would virtually fetch the same price as one of the major instruments of modern destruction. The M-X missile alone is probably beyond the reach of art, at least for the time being: the program to build it cost the taxpayer more than *$40 billion* last year. But I'm afraid art's weakness in the face of the defense budget is only temporary: remember art's potential to rise, not fall, unlike any functional object, which drops in value as it ages. In the year 2008, Degas's record-breaking sculpture, *Little Dancer at 14 Years of Age*, will still be soaring, worth at least $1,023,117,417, while our M-X missiles will be rusting somewhere, replaced by a neo-M-X line. Already as valuable as life itself, Art may yet prove as imperious as death.

Or it may not. Attend closely, as we move through an avalanche of vulgar material truths. There are no real historical analogies for what we are witnessing. Though there have been periods in the past when stunning prices have been paid by kings and merchants for single works of art—the King of Saxony astonished the world in 1754, for example, when he paid £8,500 for Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*—there is no period that rivals this one for sheer numbers of big-time bidders. In the last decade alone, the number of corporations and individuals prepared to spend well into the millions has taken a quantum leap, as any auctioneer or dealer you happen to question will tell you. ("Once there were six billionaires who collected art," says an anonymous official at Sotheby's. "Now the list is so long I can't remember them all.") Certainly we are not prepared on any ethical, critical or theoretical level for these numbers. We only have time to reel from the shocks, administered with each passing day and with each passing rumor (that this or that private collector has just laid out yet another set of million-dollar bills for yet another living artist). But the philosophical piper must be paid, and soon. We must begin to assess the meaning of Art's "price" for a wide range of hitherto sacrosanct issues—including the sanctity of art itself.

I saw gem stones [at the Warhol auction] *that he bought from me for $300 sell for $10,000 and they were only quartz.*

—Vito Giallo, antiques dealer, 1988

Money is less expensive than immortality.

—Eugene M. Schwartz, collector, 1988

As to the other cultures having art history, there are only two more main ones . . . the Chinese Empire in the Third Century, B.C. . . . the culture of Japan after . . . the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, A.D. . . . With these few cultures, the short list must be closed.

—Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions*

Certainly the argument could be made that the sale of the Warhol collection was brought about by considerations that go beyond beauty. Save here and there (an Art Deco vase, an old, glittering automobile, a Twombly, perhaps a Lichtenstein), we saw nothing but dross—classically considered—at Sotheby's. Vito Giallo is absolutely correct: his old quartz stones are still quartz stones, and they haven't changed since they left his hand. But the eager crowds and consortiums of buyers bidding for cookie jars were not seeking *esthetic* nourishment and certainly not craftsmanship, grace, or quality of execution. What they reached for—from points throughout the world—was the *apparent* transcendence summed up in that fatal word "artist." It is this transcendence that explains why collectors unload lavish sums for works of art that are fragile, ugly (by almost anyone's standard) or difficult—not to say impossible—to preserve, as in the case of certain photographs, videotapes and films. Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, which fetched $39.9 million last year, is as faded and imperiled as the steadily darkening *Mona Lisa* at the Louvre or the heavy, decomposing canvases of Anselm Kiefer (which shed straw) or Julian Schnabel (from which dishes drop and shatter with awesome regularity). But these objects are primarily signs; they signify a status coded in legend and art history, not reality. Approached recently at a gallery, David Hockney immediately agreed that no one knew how long his paste-up collages of SX-70 Polaroid snapshots would last. "Maybe only a few years," he said smiling. Naturally, one of them was snapped up soon after at Christie's for $22,000.

In the cases of Warhol, Schnabel, Hockney and many others, the collector is moved by motivations that are clearly recent, if not last-minute, in origin—and certainly not classical. In contrast, take the response of the European art market in the mid-17th century to the sale of King Charles I's magnificent collection by the Puritan rulers of England (at least the equal of Warhol's at Sotheby's). The freshly beheaded king's holdings included 400 pieces of sculpture and more than 1,400 paintings, including Raphaels, Michelangelos, Titians, Dürers, Holbeins and Rembrandts. Though some of the king's horse trappings fetched higher prices than his art, most of the works sold for respectable prices except the contemporary works. Three Rembrandts, for example, fetched exactly five pounds apiece.

What was missing among the buyers who attended the Charles I sale? An entire class. The leisured middle-class that feeds on art history, that hangs on every rumor, every nuance, every review written in every magazine and periodical published anywhere, was not yet in evidence. The buyers then were emissaries from the court, for the most part. Kings, queens, dukes and duchesses wanted only certain coin of the realm—not Rembrandts, which were hardly known or trumpeted in their day, in the manner of a Hockney in ours. Call it critical mass if you will. Call it an audience of millions compared with an audience of hundreds. And there you have it. It is the difference between one, tiny world and another, so much larger and more complicated that it can't be compared on any level . . . save one.

There is nothing which is faintly artistic that we wouldn't sell.

—John Floyd, Chairman, Christie's, 1988

The buying of contemporary art is definitely linked to the financial market. [It] *has nothing to do with art. A major change has taken place within the last ten years, as the dollar has dropped. Many of these people believe art is the safest place to store money. But something will change. Contemporary art is overvalued. I can't tell you when the readjustment is coming but it is coming. There will be a readjustment of price to value. And lots of artists will be hurt, too.*

—Richard Feigen, art dealer, 1988

The second message of this essay is: over the long run, Floyd is right and Feigen is wrong. Given artists may fade and even the market itself may rise or fall with the state of the economy, but the art-marketing system now in place is anchored in the center, not on the margins of society, and therefore is secure. The buyers are in the first place trained by an educational system that seems as permanent, in a postindustrial society, as agriculture—or as the stars. Their product is nourished by the same system, and validated by an institution unknown in the 17th century and certainly not common until this century: the art museum. Through exhibitions and publications, the museum provides food stamps, in effect, for a voracious marketplace that splits and diversifies as it expands, adding stars and schools more rapidly than it drops or ignores old ones. Collectors beget collectors who beget, indeed often invent, new art movements to buy.

In the sense that it implies the collapse of the contemporary art economy, then, Feigen's readjustment of value will never take place. If Pop art fades, Minimal art rises to replace it; if Neo-Expressionism pales, Neo-Geo is discovered to maintain the pace and breath. The barely dry paintings by Tansey, Halley and Philip Taaffe that sold at Christie's for large sums in May

surely set yet another record for auction speed, but the concept of *immediate history* is implicit in virtually every step that has been taken by the new marketing system since the end of World War II. Having learned at the feet of museums eager to embrace the next evolution, collectors no longer feel the necessity to wait for the green light. Auction purchase itself now confers validation.

Nor is any particular political system, medium or strategy beyond the scope of the market. Once thought resistant to art-as-barter, both the U.S.S.R. and China are now scheduling summer auctions at which their living artists will be hawked before capitalists on package tours to Moscow and Peking. Once deemed uncollectible because it can be easily reproduced, the photograph is now as common to the auction halls as a still life. The notion that auratic "originality" resides only in the corpus of the single object—the staple of Walter Benjamin's hallowed essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"—has been subsumed by the actions of this market. Even Conceptual art is now ingested with ease at public auction, in even its most intransigent forms. Collector Gilbert Silverman of Detroit bid $90,000 for Hans Haacke's *On Social Grease* last year at Christie's without the slightest hesitation, though the work directly mocks six major corporate and political figures (including David Rockefeller, Douglas Dillon and Richard Nixon) by quoting each of them on a separate metal plaque advocating support of the arts as a "social lubricant."

More than half the human beings ever born are alive today. Within a few years, five billion people will share this planet, and by the end of the century, more than six billion.

—The American Association of Museums, *Museums for a New Century*, 1984

It is inevitable that the art museums will survive the crisis visited upon them, as Thomas Messer says, by rising prices. Yes, the supply of masterpieces, *as we now define them*, will dwindle to a precious few. Save for the Getty here and a museum there nourished by a single munificent patron or a particularly eager government, no one will be able to purchase first-rate Raphaels, Michelangelos or Goyas, not to say Pollocks and de Koonings, most of which are already locked behind public doors (and available on videodiscs). More and more we will see huge museums rise all around the world with few "historic" works to show: the new municipal museum in Yokohama, Japan, designed by Kenzo Tange, summarizes this condition: standing at the edge of the Pacific, over the very harbor visited by Admiral Perry a century ago, the two storage towers of this museum stand tall on the horizon, totally empty, without (as yet) any sort of collection.

The destiny, then, of the museum in our time is contemporaneity, extended far beyond the boundaries even of the prolix fine-art marketing system I have already described. Not even that system, with its roots in the collector-gallery-auction circle, can provide a stream of artists and events large enough to slake the burgeoning appetite of a world now swollen with middle-class consumers. We are becoming a society committed to collecting and historicizing ourselves day in, day out. At last reliable count (1984), American museums alone had stashed away in their halls of science, history, art and whatever else more than *one billion objects*. The Nordiska Museum in Stockholm administers a wide-ranging program that collects ordinary household objects every year, documenting the present as though it were the past. The Warhol collection, committed (mostly) to cheap, mass-produced items, is yet another symptom of our direction. Surely there is no end in sight.

And surely this means the erosion of fine, high and rarefied arts, which in the past filtered *out* the common and ordinary, in order to preserve those acts of achievement that ennoble and refresh us. Unless . . . this essay packs a third, totally surprising message, refuting what appears to be an inexorable, irreversible conclusion.

Whoever shall be guided . . . by contemplating beautiful things . . . will behold a beauty marvelous in its nature . . . for the sake of which all the earlier hardships had been borne: in the first place, everlasting, and never being born nor perishing, neither increasing nor diminishing; secondly, not beautiful here and ugly there, not beautiful now and ugly then . . . so that when anyone . . . goes up from these beautiful things to that beauty, and begins to catch sight of it, he would almost touch the perfect secret.

—Plato, *The Symposium*

We must discourage the arts.

—Edgar Degas, 1890

The third and last message, though apparently contradictory, is in fact inherent in the logic of every premise we have so far examined, and in each of the first two messages (*get ready; Sotheby's can sell anything*). Given the increase in our time of cash, leisure and art history, the Platonic ideal is certain to flourish rather than falter. Pinned between poverty and the dream of royalty, our material-bound middle class yearns for spiritual relief. Instinctively we bid in the auction halls because we are certain that others are similarly yearning—to surround themselves with "useless" icons of the spirit. Of course, our errors of judgment will be compounded by the numbers of collectors now engaged in this vain pursuit. Art has never been more vulgar than now, more susceptible to Degas's admonition, because life has never been so vulgar, so poised on the edge of self-destruction. *And this is precisely why the price of art has no end: vulgarity whets the desire for its opposite.* We bid for art, more of us than ever before, to escape real life. Failing time and again, we keep on paying, in pursuit of a goal that is clearly beyond price.

Author: *Artist and filmmaker Douglas Davis is architecture critic of* Newsweek. *His new book,* The Museum Impossible: Architecture and Culture in the Post-Pompidou Era, *will be published by Abbeville.*

On Art and Economic Reasoning

An economist looks at the uses (and misuses) of his discipline by art historians, and offers some examples of the type of insights that strict economic analysis can sometimes provide.

BY J. M. MONTIAS

Patronage, *market*, *entrepreneur*, *capitalism*—these terms from economic discourse are very much in vogue among art historians today. *Commodity* has also become a leading buzzword, particularly with Marxist historians, who use it to denote the products that artists, like other producers drawn by necessity into the capitalist nexus, must sell on an anonymous market.

But not all writers who use the language of economics are equally serious students of the economic environment of art. For some, the terminology of markets and commodity exchange functions as a kind of metaphor. Others, however, employ economic terms with some precision and attempt to be carefully descriptive. Among the latter, I find the work of Lynn Jacobs particularly illuminating. In a forthcoming article in *Art Bulletin*, Jacobs shows in minute detail how 16th-century Flemish altarpieces produced for patrons differed in quality from those more mechanical and stereotyped examples that were destined for ordinary market sale. Similarly informative is Steven Goddard's study of altarpieces painted in Antwerp during the first half of the 16th century, in which he demonstrates that mechanically applied decorative patterns were routinely used to cut the production costs of pieces meant for market sale.[1]

The work of Svetlana Alpers, on the other hand, belongs to the former category. Her recent book, characteristically titled *Rembrandt's Enterprise: The Studio and the Market*,[2] is certainly replete with references to economic aspects of

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By a combination of process and product innovations, artists in the first quarter of the 17th century succeeded in lowering the cost of producing paintings and simultaneously began penetrating new markets.

Dutch art. For example, in referring to depictions of transactions involving sex and money, she alludes approvingly to Simon Schama's notion of the "sexual economy" of Dutch images and society. Citing the German Marxist, Georg Simmel, she draws a parallel between esthetic and monetary transactions. Alpers describes Rembrandt's painting activity in economic terms: she sees him as literally marketing himself through his self-portraits and claims that, in making those works, he "commodifies himself." According to Alpers, Rembrandt chose to work for the anonymous market rather than for individual patrons; he organized his studio to maximize the receipts from his pupils' labor. He did so not only because he needed and loved money, but because he refused to submit himself to the dictates of patrons. To him, the market represented freedom. (Perhaps it would have helped Alpers's argument if she had defined "patrons" and "the market" more precisely.)

Taking a different approach and working with 19th-century art, the English art historian Nicholas Green has recently been applying Marxian socio-economic theory to esthetic production in the period of industrial capitalism.[3] He sees the Impressionists, starting with Monet, as successful exploiters of their personal individuality. Their brushstrokes and their signatures became vehicles for conveying the value of their works, which, in and of themselves, might have been too commonplace in subject and execution to warrant the prices they sought to obtain for them.

Though the various lines of research I have mentioned all refer in one way or another to economic phenomena, they seldom make use of what I call economic reasoning, by which I mean the prediction or explanation of people's behavior on the basis of their selfish—or at least self-interested—choice among different options in various environments. Much current art history that uses economics tends to rely on vague ontological concepts of value stemming from 19th-century Hegelian philosophy; such research rarely addresses the economic reasons for the ways in which people's actions and choices differ.

Consider, for example, the alternative options faced by an artist who can decide either to sell his works to a patron or on an anonymous market. For Svetlana Alpers, that choice is defined in terms of the opposing concepts of freedom and servitude. An economist is inclined to approach the issue from another vantage point and to pose different questions: he would ask whether there was a large enough market demand to absorb an artist's works at prices at which he could support himself. In medieval Europe, artists did not have a choice; they had to work for patrons—churches, monasteries and noble lords—because the aggregate economic surplus of society was so small and concentrated in so few hands that an anonymous market could hardly be sustained, at least for "high art." In the Netherlands of the 17th century, however, a sizable economic surplus did in fact exist. The Dutch market for art was surely broad enough to sop up the works of artists who preferred its anonymity to the tutelage of patrons. Nevertheless, the anonymous market was not necessarily the most economically advantageous alternative for all artists. Painters like Johannes Vermeer, Gerard Dou and Frans van Mieris, who worked very slowly, turning out one highly finished piece every six months or so, could not afford to paint "on spec," that is, on the expectation that some unknown buyer would come into their studio after a work was completed and buy it. Since their works sold for high prices—those of van Mieris and Dou cost the equivalent of an average house at the time—they would have needed a great deal of working capital to keep an inventory on hand. To do so was a risky proposition, compared to the security of a steady relationship with one or two rich patrons who could be relied upon to buy their works. (For similar reasons, artists who make monumental sculpture in our day are usually dependent on municipal and corporate patronage rather than on a private clientele.)

But the situation was different for highly productive artists. Rembrandt may have been driven to vent the products of his large studio on the market because he had a considerable number of works to dispose of, a far greater number than one or two patrons could possibly be expected to purchase. Of course, this explanation does not rule out the possibility that, for Rembrandt as well as other artists, the economic motive merely reinforced a personal preference for the anonymity (or "freedom") of the available market outlets.

Leaving aside the special case of Rembrandt, there is solid ground for believing that economic motives determined the behavior of the majority of Dutch and Flemish artists, and that they treated their craft as a way of making a living rather than a sacred calling. As evidence for this proposition I would cite the numerous instances of well-established artists who ceased to paint when they made a rich marriage (Albert Cuyp, Ferdinand Bol, Jacob van Velsen) or when they found a more remunerative occupation (Meindert Hobbema).

So far I have not even once invoked the twin pillars of economic analysis, supply and demand. But these are the concepts that underlie my economic arguments concerning the choice between patron and market. Like any other industry, art production involves the transformation of labor, capital, land and material input into a particular form of output. For painting, the artist's labor is the prime factor in determining a given art work's cost. Since that labor cost is measured in terms of the wages or earnings lost while a work is being produced, the relative time required to complete a painting is the basic determinant of its cost and one of the primary factors in determining supply. Along with all other products sold on the market, the value of art works is simultaneously determined by supply and demand. The length of time it takes to complete a picture, the productivity of the studio, and the expense of carrying working capital all help to determine supply; on the other hand, the capacity of the market sets limits to demand.

The cost of supplying any goods or services, including a work of art, depends on the technique, or process, utilized to produce it. Improvements in technique lower costs and, under given demand conditions, depress prices. But demand is not always a given: changes in technique may alter a good's appearance and its desirability, in effect turning it into a new product. And, indeed, economists make a point of distinguishing between "process" and "product" innovations, a distinction that I have endeavored to apply to the history of Netherlandish art.

Using those terms, one may say that the main business of art historians has always been to identify, describe and evaluate "product" innovations: changes in the appearance of a work of art that make it seem different from what has been done before, changes that contemporaries, or later generations, have judged to be esthetically decisive. Art historians rarely pay much attention to "process" innovations, which consist in making the same or similar products with less time and effort, with cheaper materials, or, more generally, at a lower cost. To be sure, process and product innovations are most often intertwined: the product changes as the technique improves. For example, the voice of Jessye Norman on a recording is not exactly the same as her voice in a live performance. Yet the recording provides a satisfactory substitute for many—though by no means all—of her admirers. The same is true of the process innovations in Dutch 17th-century landscape and still-life painting that increased the productivity of artists and transformed the product in so doing. I have in mind the development from a linear-Mannerist to a painterly-Baroque style, a change which took place in the first half of the century and which I attempt to explain in part by economic factors.

During the latter part of the 16th century, it had still been customary for artists in the Northern provinces to work primarily for the church and for private patrons. Because the market demand was relatively small, successful artists tended to rely predominantly on patronage. But that situation would change dramatically after the iconoclastic disorders of the 1560s and the subsequent destruction of art works that had formerly been housed in Dutch churches, hospices and monasteries. That widespread destruction seems to have stimulated a new demand for art in the home. Among Roman Catholics, who often set up their own personal tabernacles and altars, the need for religious images was understandable: they were a requisite part of the now

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private, and often secret, services. But at the same time, by a more subtle process, the desire for art in the home also increased among Protestants, whose latent demand for images was hardly satisfied by the whitewashed walls of their churches. After 1609, and the truce with Spain, economic expansion and the increased prosperity of the burghers played a major role in the accelerating demand of private collectors for works of art.

But as demand grew, supply also increased sharply. By a combination of process and product innovations, artists in the first quarter of the 17th century succeeded in lowering the cost of producing paintings and simultaneously began penetrating new markets. Among their cost-lowering innovations was the shift from a linear-Mannerist to a painterly-Baroque style.

The new style was pioneered in landscapes by Esaias van de Velde, in still life by Pieter Claesz., and in portrait painting by Frans Hals. Linear-Mannerist painting, carried to a high point in the early works of Jan ("Velvet") Brueghel, Jacob de Gheyn and Hans van Coninxloo, had called for fine brushstrokes applied with painstaking accuracy. Landscapes in this style were divided into foreground, middle ground and distance, each with its color scheme and its clearly delineated features. Each flower of a still life was drawn and painted in minute detail as a separate entity. In the new painterly, or "realist," school, all parts of a landscape, still life or portrait were integrated by modulations of tone and value. Precise linear depiction gave way to evocative, "impressionistic" renditions. Rembrandt's chiaroscuro, which he used both to unify and dramatize his Biblical and mythological compositions, was an exemplary use of the new style in the genre of history painting. The monochromatic landscape paintings of Jan van Goyen, executed around the midpoint of the century, brought the style to its logical conclusion.

Even a casual comparison of a typical linear-Mannerist painting with a picture done in the painterly style of the 1630s and '40s will reveal that it must have taken far less time to produce the latter than the former—perhaps a day or two, say, compared to a month or more for a work in the older style. This difference must have been very obvious to contemporaries. Samuel van Hoogstraten, who had been a pupil of Rembrandt, tells an anecdote about a competition among three of the leading practitioners of the new style in landscape—van Goyen, Jan Porcellis and Francis Knibbergen—in which the three vied to complete a landscape on a "fairly large canvas" in the shortest possible time. He describes how each proceeded to *evoke* rather than *depict* the different parts of his composition, and how the images emerged as if by miracle. All three finished the job within a few hours (van Goyen won).

What part did the desire for gain play in developing the new style? At this late date, we are unlikely to find out. I certainly do not exclude the possibility that an autonomous artistic drive was the principal motive. Even so, the artist who had unintentionally cut his costs down was still confronted with the problem of preventing the prices at which he sold his paintings from falling to the level of his reduced costs. In the contemporary world of technology, innovators protect their innovations through patents or copyrights that give them a temporary monopoly in their diffusion; they also rely on secrecy, which is often the only effective route in the case of process innovations. The first means were unavailable to the 17th-century artist, who was only able to get exclusive right of publication for his prints (and few Dutch engravers even took advantage of this possibility). Secrecy was impossible because imitation of the product—with its painterly effects—almost automatically entailed imitation of the rapid-execution technique. Moreover, the pioneers all had pupils, from whom, by virtue of the apprenticeship contracts they had signed, they could "conceal no part of their knowledge or science."

In point of fact, from the 1620s on, the supply of works in the new style increased by leaps and bounds. Originating in Haarlem, the style rapidly spread to all parts of the Netherlands. Not surprisingly, the prices of these paintings declined, even though the overall price level of the period was constant or slowly rising. A landscape or a still life in the modern manner typically cost 15 to 20 guilders, compared to 60 or more guilders for the Mannerist paintings of the preceding generation. Van Goyen himself could not get off a treadmill: despite his enormous production, he did not succeed in making a living from his art. He kept an inn and engaged in various more or less unsuccessful business ventures to ward off bankruptcy.

In a roughly parallel development in the second half of the 19th century, the French Impressionists renovated landscape and still-life painting in much the same manner as Esaias van de Velde and Pieter Claesz. had done two-and-a-half centuries previously. They, too, developed a rapid brush-stroke technique and an evocative manner of composition. They consciously abstained from "finishing" their works, thus omitting an essential stage in completing a painting according to the precepts taught in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Their cost-cutting innovations left them vulnerable to price declines and to the fate that the Dutch innovators had suffered. But the economic environment in which they operated was very different. With the help of smart dealers like Durand-Ruel and the sympathetic support of a group of art critics, they managed to keep up their prices in spite of their high productivity and lowered costs. They did so, as we have already seen, by impressing customers with the uniqueness of their signature and the distinct personality of their brushwork. In contrast, the attractive tonal landscapes produced by van Goyen and Salomon van Ruysdael in the 1640s may have seemed nearly interchangeable for those who bought them. There were no critics or "puffers" in the 17th century whose writings could have helped to set these artists apart. In the 19th century, critics reinforced the idea of an artist's individuality. Monet, Renoir, Sisley and Pissarro succeeded in differentiating their products and keeping their names before the public thanks in large part to the opinion leaders who backed them.

This sociological observation should remind us that economic factors are never the whole story. If economic reasoning can successfully be used to illuminate certain art-historical phenomena, that reasoning still needs to be reinforced with social analysis. □

1. Steven H. Goddard, "Brocade Patterns in the Shop of the Master of Frankfurt: An Accessory to Stylistic Analysis," *Art Bulletin*, LXVII, Sept. 1985, pp. 401–17.
2. Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise: The Studio and the Market*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.
3. Nicholas Green, "Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation of the Artistic Field in France During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Art History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Mar. 1987.

Author: *J.M. Montias is a professor of economics in the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale; he is author of* Artists and Artisans in Delft: A Socio-Economic Study of the Seventeenth Century *(Princeton).*

Artists vs. the Market

Seen from the artists' vantage point—and especially the mid-career artist—the market is not all boom and caviar. Below, some diverse views of the current scene.

BY ELEANOR HEARTNEY

Looming like a great irrefutable fact over any discussion of the contemporary art scene is the shadow of the art market, variously cast by different players in the game in the role of seducer, patron, umpire or jury. From the artist's-eye view, the market often appears, to use a medieval metaphor, like a kind of original sin contaminating what ought to be a disinterested activity with the foul taint of commerce. Consider some comments:

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BY GARRY TRUDEAU

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Judy Rifka: "Whoever pays for art gets what they pay for. They can probably pay for history."

Joan Semmel: "The market is like nature. It's merciless. It's survival of the fittest."

Walter Darby Bannard: "Art is now a cultural obligation, and the art business has become the central focusing vehicle for social power."

Judy Rifka: "Whoever pays for art gets what they pay for. They can probably pay for history."

Joan Semmel: "The market is like nature. It's merciless. It's like survival of the fittest."

It has become an axiom of the contemporary art world that the market now drives the art machine and that this phenomenon is a fairly recent development. But even in the 19th century, Charles Baudelaire, in his "Salon of 1859," was bemoaning the ties between art and money in terms that sound remarkably contemporary: "Despite his lack of merit, the artist is today, and for many years has been nothing but a *spoiled child*. How many honors, how much money has been showered upon men without soul or education . . . while good poets and vigorous historians make their livings with extreme difficulty, the besotted business-man pays magnificently for the indecent little fooleries of the 'spoiled child.' "

Nor are the speculative mentality and the roller-coaster career inventions of the 1980s. In his book, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (Chicago, 1983), Serge Guilbaut recounts how the rise of Abstract Expressionism was accompanied by the obliteration of the careers of a group of previously well-established Cubist-based painters, some of whom had to face the indignity of seeing their work dumped in a half-price sale at Gimbels department store.

Within more recent memory, the unexpectedly high prices generated by the Scull sale of 1972 marked a new awareness of the potential of investment in contemporary art. "Things changed overnight when the Sculls sold their Pop collection to the Germans," Neil Jenney recalls. "You could feel it a month later." Collector Elaine Dannheisser confirms this impression. "We knew something was happening the night of the Scull sale," she says. "All of a sudden there were all these new players."

Nevertheless, for many artists, particularly those who came of age in the early 1950s, or for that matter in the 1970s, both periods when the market was relatively dormant, there remains a strong sense that the rules of the game have changed. "My generation's mythology involved the romance of being true to oneself," says Joan Semmel. "You were supposed to starve, because success meant you weren't really honest, and then be rediscovered by the next generation. . . . To be an artist meant to choose a different life-style—to live minimally, with cheap rent and minimal needs and somehow survive. Today no one can afford that romance."

One reason for the change is painfully evident to anyone who leafs through the real-estate section of the *New York Times*—SoHo lofts renting for $5,000 a month, and even in Brooklyn, going rates of $1,200 on up. James Rosenquist reports that when he moved from Minneapolis to New York in 1955, it was actually cheaper to live in the larger metropolis. "My grocery bill was $25 to $30 a week, my rent was $10 a week for five rooms. On a salary of $110 a week I could save $50 or $60 a week. That bought a lot of paint and canvas." Today, the costs of being an artist in New York have increased exponentially. Bill Conlon estimates that "taking into account rent, assistants, materials and shipping, to run a modest studio in the city costs $25,000 a year. That means you have to make $50,000. And that's modest."

Such financial realities may explain the oft-lamented market savvy of younger artists. "When I first came to New York in 1980, I couldn't get a teaching job, the New York State grant program had been curtailed and the budgets of the alternative spaces were on the wane," Peter Halley says. "Exhibiting seemed to be the only way open to making a living as an artist." He adds, "A lot of people say younger artists embrace the market. I haven't seen that to be the case. However, the attitude of disdain and hostility toward the mechanism by which the art-support system in the modern era functions began to seem ludicrous."

Ashley Bickerton echoes this sentiment: "If I'd come into my own in 1968, I'd have been only too happy to drive a tractor across the desert or burn the hair off my chest with a lighter. But today we're responding to a different episteme."

Another reason for the change in atmosphere is the sheer amount of money now lavished on art. The record prices at recent auctions have made headlines. And in the first-sale market, the buying boom that began with the Neo-Expressionists shows no sign of letting up. Pundits predicted that the October crash would reduce or at least stabilize the demand for art, but instead it seems to have had the opposite effect. Dealer Curt Marcus reports, "Business has been unbelievable for galleries and auction houses. Whenever the stock market goes down, people put money into luxury items and that, of course, includes art." Elaine Dannheisser adds, "I don't think even a recession would affect the market at this point. There's just so much money out there. It's getting more and more difficult to get the work you want."

As demand heats up, so do accusations that the market is being driven by speculators. "Speculation always existed, but the situation has deteriorated in the last year," Sandro Chia maintains. "The art system is simple. There are a few magazines, a few galleries that count. To gain control of this relatively simple system is not complicated."

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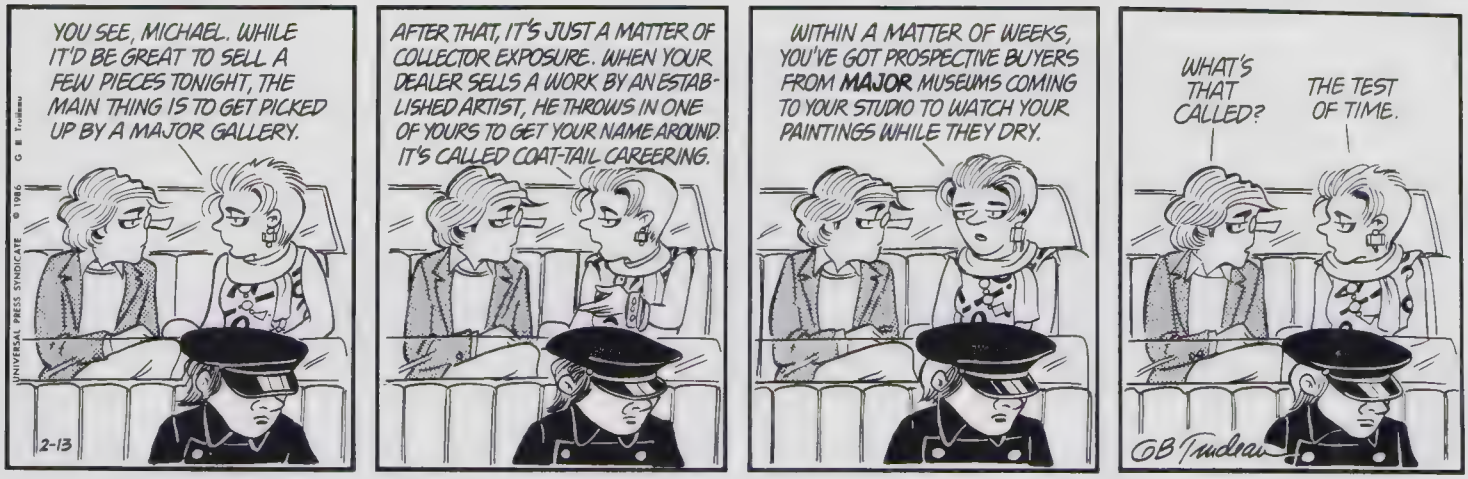
Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU


YOU SEE, MICHAEL. WHILE IT'D BE GREAT TO SELL A FEW PIECES TONIGHT, THE MAIN THING IS TO GET PICKED UP BY A MAJOR GALLERY.
AFTER THAT, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF COLLECTOR EXPOSURE. WHEN YOUR DEALER SELLS A WORK BY AN ESTABLISHED ARTIST, HE THROWS IN ONE OF YOURS TO GET YOUR NAME AROUND. IT'S CALLED COAT-TAIL CAREERING.
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WHAT'S THAT CALLED?
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Ashley Bickerton: "If I'd come into my own in 1968, I'd have been only too happy to drive a tractor across the desert or burn the hair off my chest with a lighter. But today we're responding to a different episteme."

And indeed, as many younger artists have discovered, inclusion in a key group show or a nod of approval from a megacollector may be all that is needed to turn a lukewarm career into a sizzling one. Barry X Ball describes the phenomenon. "The thing that precipitated the gold rush was my inclusion in a show called 'Geometry Now' that happened to coincide with the emergence of the Neo-Geo thing. I had never heard of Neo-Geo. I think what happened is that lots of people came to see an in-the-flesh Levine or Halley and discovered my work as well. Within a month I sold everything I'd ever made. The pressure to produce work has been at least as intense ever since."

Ball reflects that the collectors' insatiable hunger for "hot" work can affect the artist's working process. "This system doesn't work with someone who produces a small amount of work. There's a constant pressure to produce and turn it out fast. I've found that it changes the way I work. I'm not allowed to make mistakes anymore. I can't have old work around to look at. I don't deliberate as much." He notes that high demand has also been a boon to the fabrication industry as artists hand over more and more of the execution of their work to others, leading to a situation in which "artists often know less about their work physically than others do."

The constant quest for new faces—what Ball refers to as the "thrill of the chase"—has also changed the way collectors go about putting collections together. "I've seen collectors roll over their collection two or three times or dump everything on the market," Gary Stephen says. Consultant Estelle Schwartz argues that a limited turnover is very normal. "I don't think it's unhealthy if a collector on occasion sells something and acquires something else, because there is another collector out there who is delighted to buy it, and an artist should always be in a collection where he's wanted. Some artists and dealers terrorize collectors if they think of selling." However, she adds, "I have no problem with selling if it's not done to flip or speculate. One knows whether one is flipping or not."

For the artist, the highly volatile market is full of potential hazards. Matt Mullican notes, "The higher the market goes, the more precarious the situation of the artist. If I'm making money, I just put it in the bank because you never know what will happen. And I hesitate to put too much work in any one collection."

There are psychological costs as well for artists subjected to the whims of the market. Those in the limelight find that the pressure to exceed themselves never lets up. "When I first started showing, to sell one piece was a big deal," says Chia. "Now if you don't sell everything the day after the opening, you're considered a failure."

Artists outside the limelight are equally aware of the market's capriciousness. Agnes Denes quotes a bit of common wisdom, "If you don't make it when you are very young, you won't make it until you are very old." In between these two poles lies a vast no-man's-land known as the mid-career—that awkward time when an artist who has achieved a degree of recognition is no longer the latest wunderkind. Phyllis Bramson describes this difficult period: "Mid-career feels like a hole. You have this career but you're hovering. You've accomplished a certain amount but the hill is still so high and you're not sure you'll ever get there." She adds, "If you pause, you're gone. You have to win the game every time."

Semmel argues that the art system's brutal selection process serves a hidden purpose. "The market is structured in such a way that it can sustain only about five artists from each stylistic group. Once they have been anointed and their work has sold for a certain price, it is in the self-interest of all involved to maintain that investment. But what comes to the top is the result of a combination of factors. The goods have to be there, of course, but there are many others who also have them. So, we've erected this myth of the scarcity of genius, which is demanded by the market since, if there were many geniuses, prices would have to come down."

Related to this way of thinking is the notion that art must always increase in value. As Bramson points out, this creates a dilemma for artists who move in and out of the spotlight. "A mid-career artist has reached a certain level and suddenly dealers are saying, you're not young, I can't start you out, you're in a difficult price range. There's this rule that artists can't lower their prices, but if you can't, how do you get things going again? Instead of saying, let the work find a home and let the artist continue to work, the system encourages the artist to start amassing a whole body of work that's really valuable. Things are almost set up so that the work won't sell."

Dealer Irving Blum argues that lowering prices would ultimately be counterproductive for both dealer and artist. "You don't want to betray your best customers," he says. "If you get to a certain level and aren't selling, perhaps it's because prices have become too heated. Rather than lower prices, it's better to maintain the quality and wait. If people think the prices will go down, they won't buy."

One of the paradoxes of the current art boom is that it hasn't really made most artists' lives any more financially secure. In order to cope with the uncertainties of their situation, artists have evolved a variety of survival techniques. Denes, without a gallery for many years, sells work directly to museums and collectors.

HOWARD BUCHWALD

RAISE THE BLIND, 1988, OIL ON LINEN, 82 X 108 INCHES.

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One of the paradoxes of the current art boom is that it hasn't really made most artists' lives any more financially secure. In order to cope, artists have evolved a variety of survival techniques.

Jenney works through many galleries without committing himself exclusively to any one. "You don't need a dealer, you need exposure," he says. "I think the strategy for a young artist is to be in as many group shows as possible and to work with as many dealers as possible." Many artists teach. Robert Colescott remarks, "I've always operated with a teaching job as my base. It's a negative push to hang in there and not just fall into the academic thing." However, he acknowledges that there are liabilities, especially if the teaching job takes one far from the center of activity. "In some ways, it's easier to live outside New York. On the surface the economics aren't as aggravated, but when you get down to it, this is a very expensive and unstable profession. If you live elsewhere, you have high travel expenses and phone bills. It affects you wherever you are." He adds, "I tell young artists, 'Head for the big city. Go there, learn, stay long enough to get started.' But it's like telling them to go up Mount Olympus on foot."

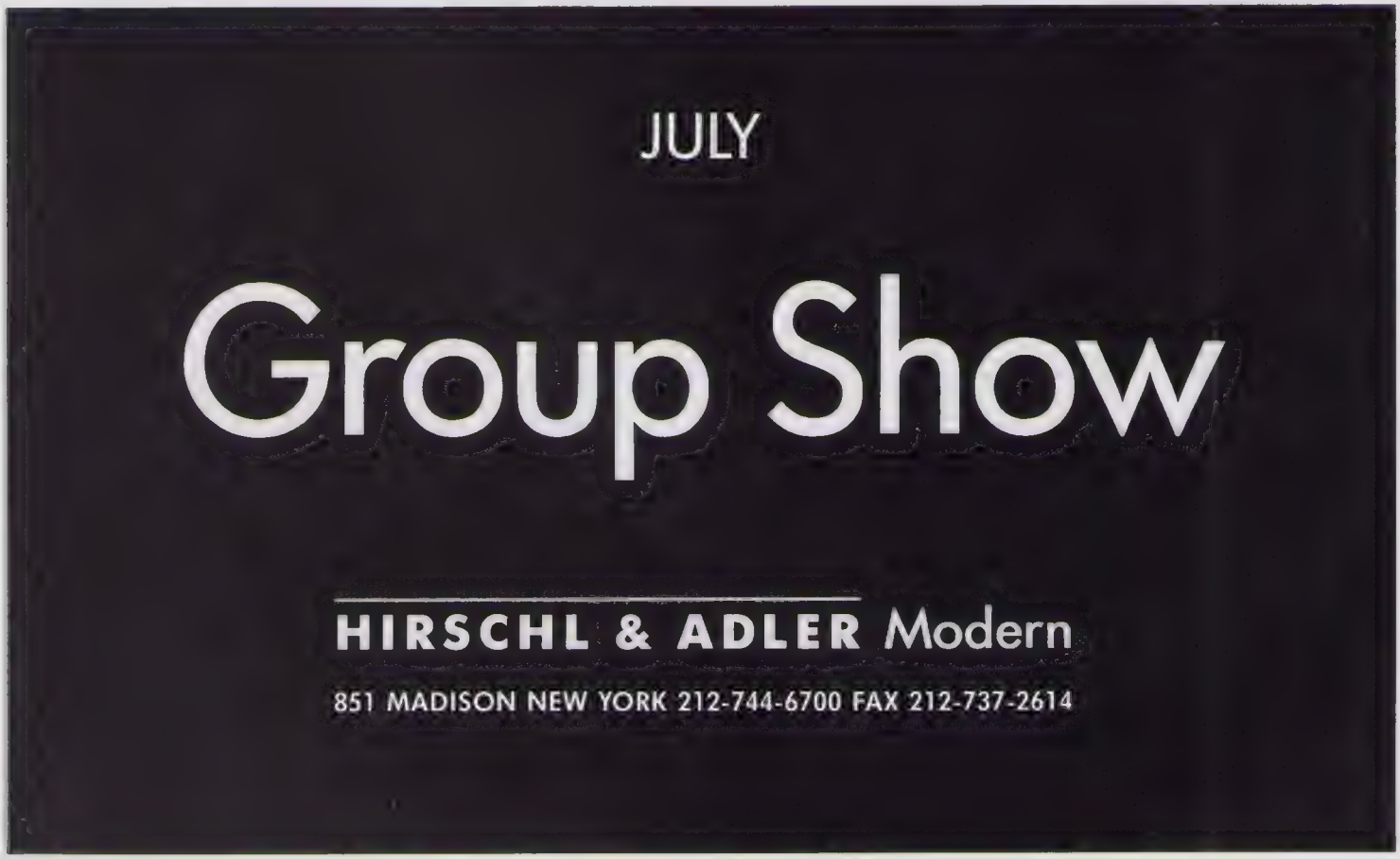
Another option, for those whose work is appropriate, is to focus on Europe, where memories are longer and money for non-commercial projects is more available. Dan Graham, whose temporary installations are generally financed by the gallery or museum that exhibits them, notes, "I'm an example of someone who strangely survives by being better known in Europe." He explains, "I've shown in a lot of places in Europe and while no one made money, it didn't much matter. The rents on galleries are much less, and there is a larger tradition of patronage and collecting. In the U.S., the pressures of failure and success are much greater."

Dennis Adams, whose public-art pieces have recently found a very receptive audience in Europe, echoes this assessment. "In America we've broken with the historical connotation of the collector as someone who puts together a related body of work based on a personal vision. That remains in Europe." Because in Europe the market is less volatile and expectations for sales are more modest—as Adams notes, "In America there are a handful of collectors and many buyers; in Europe there are also just a handful of collectors, but there are *no* buyers"—he finds that "European dealers are absolutely more receptive to concepts. They're willing to fund projects where the monetary outcome may not be clear. You sense that this is a long-term investment and maybe a life commitment. In New York if you do something with a dealer it feels like a one-night stand."

As the '90s loom, there is a feeling that the last decade's romance with commerce may be going the way of the Reagan administration. "We may be leaving the time when sales are the sign of a successful show," Marcus says. "I have this feeling that the fast money buying fast art may be on its way out." Ashley Bickerton reflects, "Things may be settling. Now the speculative impulse seems to be playing itself out on the resale market." As for his own work, which has been closely tied conceptually to the notion of art as product, he says, "I'm breaking clear of that issue and pulling away from the idea of commodity art. I think others are too."

Meanwhile, Thomas Nozkowski, who expresses regret that the alternative movements of the '70s never lived up to expectations, argues, "The sheer weight of the numbers of artists may create new institutions. Everything could change instantaneously with the smallest shift of consciousness on the part of artists, dealers and collectors." However, he admits, "The promise of $80,000 for a painting is seductive to us. As Julius Caesar said, 'The fault lies not in the stars but in ourselves.' " □

Author: *Eleanor Heartney is a free-lance critic living in New York.*



An Historic Event...

From the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad—the fabulously rich treasure house of art and culture—whose collection of Dutch and Flemish paintings was begun by Catherine the Great and is unsurpassed in all the world, come 51 masterpieces. Most have not been seen outside Russia since the 18th century.

Dutch and Flemish Paintings from the Hermitage

This exhibition is the first in a series of reciprocal exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was organized jointly by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Art Institute of Chicago and includes six major works by Rembrandt, five by Rubens, four by van Dyck, and numerous important paintings by such masters as Frans Hals, Jacob van Ruisdael and Jacob Jordaens.

Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of a Scholar*

July 9 through September 18, 1988
The Art Institute of Chicago

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THE ART MARKET

The French Art Market: A Sociological View, by Raymonde Moulin, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1987; 227 pp., $30.

I was somewhat surprised to learn that Raymonde Moulin's monumental work, *Le Marché de la peinture en France*, published in Paris in 1967, has only recently been translated into English. A detailed study of the art market in France from 1958 to 1962, it is one of those books whose immeasurable usefulness makes it an instant classic, a book we take for granted, assuming that it immediately became known worldwide. Now, however, two decades after its initial appearance, one wonders whether this American edition has not come too late.

For one thing, *The French Art Market* is a considerably abridged version of Moulin's original (which was 616 pages long). It is unfortunate that the remaining text has not been reworked and updated, for with revisions and the addition of some recent information, Moulin could have told us a lot about the many upheavals that have affected the international market over the last ten years. As the book stands, certain aspects of the situation Moulin analyzes with such care will seem rather provincial to today's American reader. Without dwelling on the defects of this edition, let me point out that several very valuable appendices and footnotes have been omitted, as well as an important chapter on auctions. (Moulin claims in her preface that public auctions do not greatly influence the contemporary art market, but recent events, such as the soaring prices of Jasper Johns's work, obviously prove her wrong.) Moreover, some of Moulin's text now seems quite dated (particularly since no effort was made to "translate" the 1967 prices into their present value), and many of her opposing categories no longer seem meaningful. In her chapter titled "Multiple Markets," for example, she initially splits the market for painting into "Non-Art" and "Art," with the latter category divided into "Recognized Classics" and "The Burgeoning Contemporary Scene." Contemporary art is in turn discussed as a battleground for those who defend "tradition" (Beaux-Arts figurative painting) versus those who support "innovation" (abstract art). Finally, there is Moulin's outdated description of the gulf separating the Parisian market from the rest of the French market.

The chapter devoted to painters also suffers from the provincialism of the Parisian scene at the time the book was written: the passage dealing with the career of a painter from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts could well have been omitted, and the myth of the self-taught artist does not hold much water nowadays. But then this same chapter also unveils some very valuable information about contracts between artists and dealers, a subject usually shrouded in great mystery. Moulin offers an insightful analysis (with a Marxist bent) into the economic reasons for that secrecy, and a useful appendix provides documentation on the informative Matisse-Bernheim case.

Time has had a curiously different effect on Moulin's chapter titled "Art Critics." These pages, filled with ironic comments about the ingratiating venality and mediocrity of critical discourse, would have seemed strange if they had appeared in America at the time they were published in France some 20 years ago, but oddly enough they have grown to seem more appropriate. Indeed, I almost believe that Moulin's rather pessimistic pronouncements can now be applied internationally.

Despite my few reservations, Moulin's book is one that cannot be ignored. It was the first to break the wall of silence that surrounded its subject (and Moulin emphasizes the difficulties she faced in obtaining certain facts). Originally written as a doctoral dissertation under Raymond Aron, the philosopher of history to whom the work was dedicated, *The French Art Market* takes the form of a vast inquiry into the psychological and economic mechanisms that drive the various "actors" in the art market.

Moulin's ethnographic training influenced her approach. Before she became interested in the art world, she had worked in a more specifically political area, studying the effects of decolonization in African countries, and when she turned to the art market, she continued to have a marked preference for fieldwork. In this study, she relies on interviews with a number of informers (dealers, collectors, critics, artists) who maintain their anonymity. This methodology, briefly described in her introduction, results in a certain "coolness" of discourse that is very admirable in the analysis of such a "hot," passionate field as the art market. It also provides the reader with an extraordinary wealth of supporting documentation. Obviously, when the subject is the relationship between art and money, many combinations are possible: Moulin's cast contains jealous artists, ignorant collectors, cynical dealers and passionate critics, as well as a wide variety of other character-types. If a contemporary Balzac wanted to write a novel about the art market, Moulin's interviews would provide a complete gallery of portraits from which to draw.

Moulin's priority, naturally, is to put order into this chaos, and to pinpoint certain historical landmarks in the evolution of the art market, which is, after all, a fairly recent phenomenon. Art has always been sold, of course. But the market as we know it today (competitive and free) did not appear in France until the 18th century, along with what Thomas Crow has called "the emancipation of the public sphere" in art. In her first chapter, Moulin illustrates clearly that, contrary to what is generally believed, the market began to develop well before the rupture that occurred with the "Salon des Refusés" in 1863. The Royal Academy itself had encouraged the creation of a free market by directly opposing the practice established by medieval corporations and by not allowing painters to engage in commerce—that is, by forbidding them to maintain businesses for the sale of art. The Academy preferred that sales be made through art dealers, whose numbers increased in the 18th century. ("Legend has it that Leonardo died in the arms of the king of France, but history tells us that Watteau died in the arms of the art dealer Gersaint.")

But it was the emergence of Impressionism—an "avant-garde" proud of its independence—that radically transformed the rules of the game. Paul Durand-Ruel was the first dealer to have understood the novelty of the situation and to have known how to take advantage of it, managing with great tenacity to overcome several financial crises. Moulin emphasizes his genius for advertising: he invented the one-man show, launched a magazine, organized group shows abroad and, most important, "set out to conquer the American market by opening a gallery in New York" in 1886. As Moulin says, "Durand-Ruel was one of the first modern art dealers in two senses: he sought to establish a monopoly, and by championing painting not yet in demand he was able to accumulate a stock that ultimately yielded handsome returns." He became the role model for Ambroise Vollard and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (who introduced the use of contracts)—and, it might be added, for Leo Castelli.

Moulin analyzes, among other things, how the famous sale of works from the collection of the group called the Peau d'Ours (March 2, 1914) profoundly changed the public's attitude toward contemporary art: When the paintings assembled by these collectors were resold for very high prices, it became clear for the first time that modern art—works by Gauguin, Vuillard, Redon, Matisse and Picasso—were highly profitable investments, more profitable even than gold or real estate. This change in attitude was confirmed by high society's new-found interest in contemporary art as a result of the *Parade* scandal and the triumph of the Ballets Russes. Though attention to art collecting subsided during the crisis of the Great Depression and World War II, by the '50s it began booming again. There were other swings of the pendulum (notably a downturn in France in the '60s), but this infatuation with art-as-investment was clearly established as the mainspring of the art market as we know it today.

Moulin devotes one of her chapters to delineating a typology of dealers: there are a few pages on the broker; a few more on what I would call the "antiquarian" (the case of Wildenstein is analyzed in detail, although the facts have not been updated); and a long passage on what Moulin has termed the "entrepreneur," that is, the dealer who takes the greatest risks but who also shapes the market the most (Kahnweiler is the prime example). Moulin exposes the wheeling and dealing behind these "entrepreneurs" (manipulation of inventory, driving up prices by anonymous bids at auctions, putting pressure on artists). She does not let herself get drawn into their self-satisfaction (it is hardly ever the deal-

"Mental Planes." 83½h x 71w x 2d acrylic, modeling paste & sticks, 1988

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er, she says, who discovers an artist: "painters and critics preselect the works that come to the attention of dealers"). Nor, however, does she portray them in the same black light as do the anonymous artists with whom she spoke. The interviews with dealers show that profit is not their sole motivation, even if, as Etienne Gislon points out, a painting's "raison d'être" is different for the buyer and seller, because the seller prefers the money that the sale will generate to the painting, whereas the buyer, for whatever reasons, "prefers the painting to the money that the purchase will cost him."

It is these reasons that are discussed in the remarkable chapter that Moulin devotes to collectors. Their idiosyncrasies of discourse and habit are scrutinized (for example, Moulin points out their collective resistance to the term "collector"). Their use of a variety of metaphors—sumptuary, ludic, sacred, amorous—as well as their various forms of behavior (much more varied than is generally believed) are studied in depth. One is tempted, upon reading Moulin, to revise Baudrillard's somewhat simplistic "psychology of the collector" (in *Le Système des objets,* 1968) which suffers by comparison. Although the sociological explanation Moulin offers for this extreme diversity in behavior (class origin, geographic location, profession) may not be definitive, it is certainly enlightening.

In the chapter "From Junk to Masterworks," Moulin considers two extremes of the art market: sidewalk painters, whose sales are determined by free competition, and old masters, whose market is controlled by what Moulin calls monopolistic practices. Moulin notes that since junk paintings presumably have no esthetic value and since the esthetic value of works by old masters is beyond question, it is theoretically possible to disregard questions of esthetic worth and to examine both categories in purely economic terms. Yet the major interest of Moulin's intensive study is in the way she shows how that "esthetic question" in fact remains decisive. Deftly playing on the binary opposition of these two market types (abundance/scarcity), Moulin indicates how at every level, even the most humble, painters "do their utmost to differentiate their wares." She points out the escalating importance of monopolistic practices and of the discourse of specialists (art historians, critics) in the sale of art works as those works move up in the esthetic hierarchy.

Moulin's training in ethnography influenced her approach. Her method produces a characteristic "coolness" of discourse that is very admirable in the analysis of such a "hot," passionate field as the art market. It also provides an extraordinary wealth of documentation.

Moulin characterizes the market for contemporary painting as something of a compromise between the type of market that exists for junk painting and the market for old masters; she sees its structure as based on "monopolistic competition" and as influenced by a greater number of irrational elements. (Thus the contemporary art market best demonstrates how art works elude Marx's labor theory of value—not that Marx ever considered his theory applicable to art.) Unlike the market for old masters, the contemporary art market lacks two sets of objective factors—supply (which is potentially unlimited with contemporary art) and demand ("a subjective affair, unstable and manipulable"). Nevertheless, Moulin does not see a qualitative difference between the old master and the contemporary art markets. Irrational factors operate in both, and "a subjective theory of value governs the art market as a whole." Yet she argues that "it is still possible to discern an inner logic in [its] operation."

No doubt Moulin's last section on the contemporary art market is the one that most deserves to be rewritten (even the appendix that shows a "map of Paris galleries" has not been updated and therefore does not indicate that the center of gravity has shifted since Beaubourg was built). Sales strategies and buying policies have probably not changed much over the last 20 years, but this book was written during a time of market crisis, when the boom of the '50s was only a memory, whereas today we are in a period of immense ferment. Many new phenomena which Moulin did not foresee have considerably altered the scene she was describing in 1967: astronomical prices, the increasing importance of direct investment in contemporary art by large businesses, the dominant role played by art advisers of multinational companies, corporate support for the arts, the rise in international collaboration between major dealers, the aggressiveness of new collectors, the increase in the number of contemporary art museums, etc. I am not sure that it is, as Moulin suggests in her preface, merely a matter of degree. Still, the way she demonstrates that a certain economic logic governs this highly irrational domain remains perfectly valid today, and the conclusion she drew from her study in 1967—that the market is the "organizing principle of artistic life"—is certainly even more justified now than it was then.

—Yve-Alain Bois

Translated by Alyson Waters.

Author: *Yve-Alain Bois teaches art history at Johns Hopkins University.*

ART, MONEY & FICTION

The Golden Calves, by Louis Auchincloss, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1988; 213 pp., $15.95.

The art museum world has two hemispheres as distinct as those of the planet Mercury; one faces the gentler starlight of the public and concerns itself with the salutary effects of art upon an audience. Although, as anyone who has spent a minute as a curator can tell you, this hemisphere is not without its dirty politics, the real nastiness takes place on the boardroom side of the museological globe, the side that directly faces the sun called Money.

Before his latest novel, *The Golden Calves*, which concerns that less public side of the art museum business, Louis Auchincloss was the venerable author of 39 books, including 29 works of fiction, among them the wonderful *The Rector of Justin*. Deservedly praised as a consummate storyteller, Auchincloss operates in a territory about midway between John Updike and Danielle

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Taxing the Imagination

Whether inadvertently or intentionally, the new tax law saddles artists with a potentially huge tax increase. What are its possible long-term effects?

BY WALTER ROBINSON

As the April 15, 1988, tax filing deadline drew near, artists discovered with mounting alarm that they had been blindsided by the Tax Reform Act of 1986. An obscure footnote to the new tax code, though it didn't specifically refer to painters, sculptors or graphic artists, would nevertheless apply to them, the I.R.S. announced. Inadvertently, with next to no advance warning and even less public debate, Congress had rewritten the rules governing the way artists deduct the expenses of producing their work, in effect saddling them with a whopping tax increase.

At issue is Section 263A, the uniform capitalization provision, a set of accounting regulations originally devised for manufacturers of mass market goods. Uniform capitalization requires that deductions for production costs be spread over the life of the product rather than taken in the same years expenses occurred. In revising Section 263A to crack down on certain tax shelters (partnerships ostensibly organized to produce books, films and records, but in fact designed to allow investors tax deductions three or four times the amount of actual cash invested), Congress expanded the rules to cover the production of "films, sound recordings, videotapes, books and other similar property embodying words, ideas, concepts, images, or sounds, by the creator thereof."

Prior to tax reform, artists had been considered providers of services, like doctors and lawyers, and were allowed to write off their expenses as they were incurred. And despite indications that Congress never meant to subject artists to the tightened capitalization rules, the I.R.S. gave notice that henceforth free-lance artists, authors, photographers, illustrators, craftspeople, filmmakers, musicians and all other self-employed creative entrepreneurs who produce tangible products for sale were no longer exempt.

Capitalization sharply restricts artists' traditional tax write-offs for production expenses and overhead. No longer could artists lump together all their expenses—art supplies, studio rent, models' fees—and deduct that amount from their gross income before paying taxes on the remainder. Instead, under Section 263A, artists would have to calculate (and be prepared to document) the production expenses of each and every individual art work, and would be allowed to deduct a particular work's cost only when it was sold. In other words, if in 1987 a painter spent $10,000 to produce a body of work, and found buyers for one-fourth of the pictures that year, the painter could deduct only $2,500 from 1987 earnings, rather than the entire $10,000 allowed prior to tax reform. If our hypothetical artist were single with taxable income of $20,000, the loss of that $7,500 deduction would boost taxes due by more than 50 percent. By analogy, a lawyer operating by these rules would be able to deduct costs only for cases he or she wins, and then only after the cases were litigated.

LEONARDO MEETS THE I.R.S.

This simple example, however, barely scratches the surface of the Byzantine accounting requirements of Section 263A. For instance, if an art work is expected to produce income over a number of years—unusual for easel painters, perhaps, but common enough for some sculptors, plus printmakers, photographers and authors—the artist must somehow estimate the total revenue anticipated from the work in all future years, and allocate its cost proportionally among them. Should the projected earnings of the work change from year to year, the fractional deductions must also be adjusted accordingly. The new rules also seem to require an annual inventory of works on hand from earlier years, with an accompanying reassessment of their present and future value. Eventually, the cost of unsold works could be written off as a capital loss, but only if deemed "worthless" by the artist, though by what procedure—destruction? giving them away? withdrawing them forever from sale? no purchase offers for 20 years? a critical lambasting?—remains uncertain.

For all but makers of the most sought-after art objects, the new rules promised more paperwork, smaller deductions and higher taxes. Dependable national statistics on artists and their income are notoriously hard to come by, and no study was made of the potential economic effects of applying Section 263A to artists. One Congressional estimate, however, put the total cost to artists as a group as high as $40 million over five years—small change relative to our trillion-dollar deficit but still a considerable amount of art supplies.

Authors and photographers, who have [illegible] national professional associations, began [illegible]ying Congress for exemption from uniform capitalization last summer. The more poorly organized

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fine and commercial artists didn't join the battle in force until early '88. With the coordination of the Graphic Artists Guild, artists' groups banded together to form Artists for Tax Equity (AFTE), which now includes almost 70 organizations, ranging from the American Abstract Artists Group to the Cowboy Artists of America. The new group hired Washington, D.C., lobbyist Paul Skrabut of Palumbo & Cerrell to press their case and, perhaps more importantly, mounted an extensive grass-roots letter-writing campaign to members of Congress. Particularly active in what has proved to be both an unusual and effective national effort have been Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, the Foundation for the Community of Artists, the Women's Caucus for Art, the Society of Illustrators and the American Federation of Teachers.

The strongest and most frequently heard argument of the new art lobby emphasized the impossible bookkeeping burdens of the new tax law, and predicted dire consequences for art in the U.S. as a result. "At best it would be a nightmare of paperwork, leaving almost no time for creation," said Paul Basista, national executive director of the Graphic Artists Guild. Mark Freeman, president of the National Society of Painters in Casein and Acrylic, charged that the tax change forces the artist to become "a bookkeeping clerk working for the benefit of the I.R.S." in an angry letter to the *New York Times*. "Capitalization is costly and unworkable," wrote Anita Lovitt in *The Update*, the newsletter of the Graphic Artists Guild in New York, "and will seriously injure, if not destroy, the creativity on which the economy depends."Art-world accountant Ruben Gorewitz sounded the most patriotic of all, with a warning published in the *Times*: "We used to be first in the world of textiles, automobiles, electronics and steel. The only area in which we are still the first is the world of art. The President and Congress, with the new Tax Reform Act, may have just helped us lose this one, too."

By mid-May, the I.R.S. must have begun to feel the heat generated by AFTE's lobbying push. The tax agency, citing its authority to make administrative changes to lighten the paperwork load for taxpayers, announced a new bookkeeping method it called "three-year safe harbor" (but known as "three-year amortization" by accountants), billed as an optional alternative for artist tax-filers, with easier bookkeeping requirements. Artists would be allowed to sum up all of their production expenses as prior to the 1986 tax changes, but would be permitted to deduct only half of that total in the year the expenses were incurred. The remaining quarters of the total could be deducted in the two subsequent years.

With three-year amortization, which eliminates all the protested paperwork without restoring the entire write-off of business expenses for artists, the I.R.S. had trumped AFTE's central argument. Some legislators, as well as less attentive taxpayers, gained the impression that the problem was solved. In fact, the tax situation for artists is still confused, particularly for those who sell more than half their works in the year they were created: they must choose between the complicated record-keeping and income forecasting of capitalization, or opt for amortization's 50-percent limit on deductions, which could mean that costs on some works that sold could not be deducted until the following year.

The art lobby is not buying either I.R.S. option, and promises to mount a renewed fight for a Congressional exemption. "The I.R.S. has decided to stick it to artists by devising what can only be called an 'artist penalty tax,' " said one artist-advocate. "Artists, alone of all the professions in the country, are singled out for this so-called three-year safe-harbor. It shows complete contempt for the business of creative art." Long Island Representative Tom Downey has introduced a bill (H.R. 4473) in the House to exempt free-lance writers, photographers and artists, as well as small independent film and video makers, from the capitalization rules enacted in 1986. Downey's bill has to date garnered the support of 70 House co-sponsors, as well as that of AFTE. On the Senate side, Senator Daniel P. Moynihan (himself the author, co-author or editor of 14 books) has announced his intention to sponsor a companion bill, but as of this writing has not yet introduced the legislation.

Spokespeople for both legislators expressed confidence that the measure would eventually be adopted but, citing election-year distractions and the ongoing effort to reduce the national debt, hesitated to predict when. Artist-advocates fear that without widespread and intensive efforts by the arts community, the rules may be allowed to stand.

They cite a continuing hostility in Congress toward vanguard art, as well as the art-market boom of recent years that has changed the image of the artist as a commercially maladroit bohemian. And the argument that the tax rule change should be reversed because it will produce a negligible amount for the U.S. Treasury also suggests that Congress could easily regard the issue as insignificant—and decline to change it on those grounds.

Both Congress and the I.R.S. have over the years made a variety of efforts to trim away special benefits for artists contained in the tax code. Most notorious in art-world circles is the Tax Reform Act of 1970, which eliminated the tax code provision that had allowed artists to donate their own works to museums and take deductions based on the works' full market value (the privilege was retained for collectors). In 1976 the I.R.S. tightened the rules governing deduction of costs associated with businesses operated out of the home, in effect forcing many artists to construct rooms specifically set aside for art-making separate from personal living areas.

Even though the median annual income of artists is usually estimated at less than $10,000, the Treasury Department has long seen a potential for tax avoidance in the art profession. Struggling artists often support themselves with odd jobs or have other sources of income, and the I.R.S. has long suspected them of taking nonbusiness, personal expenses as business deductions. In 1969, the tax agency adopted what has come to be called the "hobby loss provision," a rule-of-thumb that required self-employed taxpayers to show a profit two out of five consecutive years; otherwise, the taxpayer would be classified as a hobbyist and allowed deductions for expenses only to the amount of profits derived from the activity. But this rule was only an informal guideline; in one famous case, decided in 1977, an artist who hadn't made a profit in 20 years was found by a tax court to be entitled to take art expenses as business deductions, despite a contrary finding by the I.R.S. (The 1986 Tax Act finally adopted the hobby-loss provision as law, in the process upping the profit requirement to three out of every five years.)

Unless the nation's writers, artists and other free-lancers make a forceful case to Congress, they will find their tax position permanently both more complicated and more costly.

Unless the nation's writers, artists and other free-lancers make a forceful case to Congress in the coming months, it seems more than possible that they will find their tax position permanently both more complicated and more costly. Would this event extend beyond individual pocketbooks and change the way artists work and the kind of art they make? It seems likely that many artists would be forced by economic concerns to work smaller, making less expensive models, plans and drawings, for instance, rather than full-scale finished projects. Or it could impoverish the arts by encouraging artists to produce work that would sell quickly (as if they needed such a stimulus) and discourage more difficult and adventurous, and presumably less salable, creative experimentation. Ironically, some avant-garde trends seem to have anticipated these most recent developments in the tax code (though with little benefit to most working artists), as if vanguard artists were wrestling with the same contradictions of art and commerce as the I.R.S. Perhaps the new tax rules arise from the same forces that led artists to strip away romantic myths of creativity to foreground art's commodity function. Perhaps the new rules will foster a revival of the "dematerialized" art of the '60s and '70s, which not being "tangible" in tax code lingo might receive easier tax treatment. Finally, the tax changes could force many artists out of the profession altogether, a consequence with multiple and uncertain ramifications. □

Author: *Walter Robinson is a self-employed entrepreneur who shows a profit at least three out of every five years.*

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Going "SoHollywood"

According to some recent movies, the art world is full of bogus ideas, too much money, venal art dealers and kinky sex. Herewith, a look at Hollywood's latest villains.

Michael Douglas, power broker, sits in his office surrounded by art works in Wall Street. *© 1987 20th Century Fox.*

BY CARRIE RICKEY

Artists, put down your paintbrushes and your welding irons. It's time to take up arms! Time to mobilize an Art Anti-Defamation League!

Why, you ask?

You've probably been too busy to notice—sequestered as you surely are in your studios—but Hollywood has discovered you. Not you the makers of paintings and sculptures which are connotationally rich in and of themselves, but you the cultural symbol.

This is not, alas, like being a sex symbol. If Hollywood assigned moral rank to professions, artists would occupy the lowest levels, beneath the insider traders, lower than the cocaine czars, probably on a par with child molesters. In fact one recent "art" film, *The Wolf at the Door*, which purports to be based on the biography of Paul Gauguin, depicts pedophilia as one of the Symbolist painter's more wholesome attributes.

You don't have to be an iconographer to recognize that in its recent treatment of art and artists Hollywood has been telegraphing to the movie audience a variety of assumptions that focus on the art world's bogus ideas, counterfeit values and sexual kinkiness. If you doubt this, then let's play iconographer and examine some recent Hollywood portraits of the artist.

Trust me, this analysis should make you plenty nostalgic for classic "art" movies like *Rembrandt* (1936), *The Light that Failed* (1939), *Lust for Life* (1956) and *The Horse's Mouth* (1958), in which artists were depicted as daft, impoverished geniuses frustrated in their attempts to cling to the fringes of the social carpet. In such movies, the artist was presented as the last individualist, the uncompromising outsider, a visionary who would die if he (yes, it was always a he) couldn't do it his way. That he wasn't remunerated for his contributions, that society saw him as a nut case, that the gods punished him with destitution, blindness and madness (or a combination of same), was seen—in the movie's terms at least—as a sign of his unbudging integrity. The artist's work was important, money and acclaim were not. If the classic "art" films have a message, it's that the artist is the last honest man.

Is it artists who have changed, or is it only artists in the movies? A few new films suggest that it might be the corrupting influence of the art apparatus that's to blame. Dealers, beware, your reputations are being sullied! You may want to join your stable in militating for an Art Anti-Defamation League. For now, when films go what I call "SoHollywood," they do so to depict a milieu that is not on the fringes, but rather at the very center of the social carpet. They evoke an overripeness that comes from too many compromises and too much money, those agents that are seen as contaminants to creativity in classic "art" films.

In recent movies, artmongers have replaced mafiosi as archvillains. Who is more venal, the Los Angeles art dealer in *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984) whose gallery is a cover for his flourishing cocaine cartel, or the New York art dealer in *Legal Eagles* (1986) who pretends that the major works of a Rothko-like painter have been destroyed by fire, though he's just hoarding them because their "rarity" jacks up their value?

What do art and the art world signify in these films? In *Beverly Hills Cop*, people who "understand" the Ed Kienholz-like sculptural tableaux in the art gallery are like those yes-men who pretend to "see" the Emperor's New Clothes. When the eponymous cop Eddie Murphy looks at these sculptures and laughs, "hyuk, hyuk, hyuk," it signals to the audience that he won't be part of this fraud called art.

Explicitly, then, in this film art equals pretension. Implicitly, *Beverly Hills Cop* equates art with something else. As the story progresses and Murphy discovers that the perpetrator of this so-called fraud is also a coke dealer (if you have a sense of humor about these things, the conflation of the two enterprises is pretty amusing), an implied assumption takes form: art, like cocaine, should be a controlled substance. This is the first film to insinuate that we should "Just say no to art." The artist—who is never seen here—is guilty by association with the crooked dealer.

In *Legal Eagles*, the dealer believes, commercially speaking, that the only good artist is a dead one. Played by that slime king Terence Stamp, who is British like *Beverly Hills Cop*'s dealer Steven Berkoff (one of the presumptions of these movies is that dealers, like their art, come from the sick soul of Europe), he is essentially a commodities trader who's cornered the market in one artist's work. Like a driven Bunker

Hunt—the Texan who tried to control the silver market—Stamp will force up the prices of these canvases that have no psychic value to him as works of the imagination. Explicitly, for him, art equals money, if at best an inflated currency.

Legal Eagles is amusing (again, to those who have a sense of humor about these things) because of its assumptions about artists. The dead artist (seen in flashback) is a dupe. His performance-artist daughter—played by that golden void Darryl Hannah—is suspected of trying to steal her father's paintings from his corrupt dealer; she's under suspicion only because artists are, in this movie's terms, suspicious characters. I mean, they don't get regular paychecks like the film's lawyer heroes Robert Redford and Debra Winger. That artists produce things of value is dismissed as purely fortuitous—like winning a lottery or inheriting a trust fund. That they get paid for what they make is seen to be a product of an inflationary marketplace whose rules are incomprehensible to the average joe.

Artists used to be represented in the movies as noble, if erratic, outsiders. Recently, however, artists and artworldlies have been typecast as corrupt and erratic insiders—it is the outsiders who are stable and mildly scandalized by what goes on behind loft doors.

In these films the art community is a netherworld aggressively hostile to those average joes—i.e., Eddie Murphy in *Beverly Hills Cop* or Robert Redford in *Legal Eagles*—who are not of it. There is a theme in these recent "art" movies that could be termed the "Al in Blunderland" leitmotif: in *Cop* or *Eagles* or *After Hours* (1985), in which Griffin Dunne goes to SoHo for a late date, the art world is an enigmatic land with its own private language, its own currency and its own arbitrary rules, a land where sex seems to be everywhere though no one ever gets laid.

An entire genre of movies now exists in which tourists shop in SoHo for art and sex, often combining the two pursuits. One of the earliest of these is *An Unmarried Woman* (1978), which proposes SoHo as a shopping district for specialty sex. (Is it coincidental that this movie was released at the nanosecond boutiques began to outnumber galleries in SoHo?) A key scene in the film involves a SoHo loft party at which heroine Jill Clayburgh discovers that her therapist is lesbian and that the most important art critic in New York is impotent and a latent homosexual who likes to watch his vampirelike wife seduce pretty young boys whom he will make into art stars if they are complaisant.

The bad artist in *An Unmarried Woman* is the one who submits to a power figure's kinky tastes. By contrast, the good artist is Alan Bates—paintings courtesy Paul Jenkins—who explains that he became an Abstract Impressionist the day his father hurled a jar of herrings at his mother and it left an evocative pattern on the kitchen wall. Good art here is the product of unmediated emotion, bad art that of manipulated emotion—which may be the only attempt at an evaluation of art offered by any of these movies.

In *Manhattan* (1979), Woody Allen depicts SoHo as a cruiser's supermarket and the art world as the last refuge of the pretentious. *Manhattan* was the first movie to equate the maximalist food offerings at SoHo's gourmet palace Dean & Deluca with the Minimalist art at the Sonnabend Gallery, a great place to pick up women. "That steel cube was brilliant," babbles *Manhattan*'s Diane Keaton in impenetrable artspeak, "it had a marvelous negative capability." Hero and outsider Woody Allen looks at her askance, quickly concluding that although her brains belong in a Cracker Jack box, her bod belongs in the Louvre—which is the treatment generally accorded "art girls" in new "art" movies.

If Hollywood were to assign moral rank to professions, artists would occupy the lowest levels, beneath insider traders, cocaine czars, probably on a par with child molesters.

Scene from Legal Eagles *showing Darryl Hannah as a performance artist.*
© 1986 Universal City Studios, Inc.

In After Hours, *Griffin Dunne follows the gaze of a papier-maché sculpture in a SoHo loft. Courtesy Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archives.*

The Triple Crown winners in this SoHollywood genre are *9½ Weeks* (1986) and *After Hours*, which assume that the art world is a place where kinky art, kinkier money and kinkiest sex are inextricably entangled. Significantly, these are both movies that flirt with, but never actually date, sadomasochistic sex.

9½ Weeks, a movie that perhaps correctly understands sadomasochism as the threat of exceeding one's credit card limit while shopping at Commes des Garçons, features Kim Basinger as a SoHo art gallery assistant who submits to a sadomasochistic relationship with Mickey Rourke, a Wall Street arbitrager. Symbolically, they are the union of art and money—always a supercharged combination, and here made electric with perverse eroticism. As is sometimes the case in a dealer/artist relationship, money dominates and art is submissive. In *9½ Weeks*, as in many of the new movies under review here, art is viewed as being neither an intellectual pursuit nor a visionary vocation—it is a life-style, namely, rough trade. While the movie's big S-&-M moment, Rourke's icing of Basinger's nipples, hardly seems the stuff of sexual domination, no movie states it more clearly that art dealers are in willing bondage to the money men.

Is it significant that the only completed sex act in *9½ Weeks* is autoerotic? While reviewing an artist's slides—hyperrealist fish out of water, images which underscore the theme of being out of one's natural element as, in this instance, a sex slave—Basinger is inspired to masturbate. This may very well be the only scene in the canon of SoHollywood films in which any connection is made between art and pleasure. Note, if you will, that it's not a painting but a slide reproduction of one that does the trick for Basinger.

Similarly, the art world of *After Hours* isn't populated by virtuous champions of esthetics but rather by unsavory personalities who sport not artistic notions but leather and chains. The film's protagonist, an uptown lonely guy played by Griffin Dunne, comes to SoHo for a piece of the action. As does *9½ Weeks*, *After Hours* paints SoHo as a torrid zone where art girls are easy. The twist to this portrayal, of course, is that though SoHo women appear to be wanton, they would rather make art than love. And what art it is! Ceramic bagels and papier-maché figurative sculptures (lightweight George Segals). In one sense of the movie, art represents the emptiness of art-as-simulacrum. The starving Dunne has only ceramic bagels to sate his appetite, phantom

humans to nourish his hunger for companionship. In another sense, art is an enigmatic, moody accessory worn by enigmatic, moody SoHoites. Like the black leather and chains worn by sculptor Linda Fiorentino, art paraphernalia—the lofts, the nocturnal lifestyle—is there to satisfy an appetite for abuse. Whips, paintbrushes, chains, chicken wire and a recitation of some choice lines from Kafka's *Amerika* get artists entrée into a punk club called Berlin.

Perhaps to ask the question is to answer it, but what does the recurring theme of art-world S & M mean in SoHollywood movies such as *9½ Weeks* and *After Hours*? That artists are in bondage to money? That humiliation is the fascination artists exert over collectors and tourists lured to the downtown zoo? The symbolism is murky, yet absolutely clear.

After Hours takes a further tongue-in-cheek shot at contemporary art in an episode featuring Cheech and Chong. In the movie, the pair play cat burglars emptying SoHo lofts of stereos and cameras, but Cheech wants to purloin some sculpture as well. "Why?" demands his partner, "these things are SO ugly." Cheech comes back with a comically twisted transvaluation: "Don't you understand, man, that the uglier art is, the more it's worth?"

In *Wall Street*, art is the reward for criminal acts by big-time thieves, namely insider traders. Paintings by big-name modern artists telegraph to the world that their owners are men of a certain social status: nouveau riche. In the offices of power broker Michael Douglas, colossal gold-leafed paintings are a way of saying that this is a place where people deal in gilt-edged securities, with a little commodities-fixing on the side.

More humorous—for those who laugh to keep from crying at the spectacle—are the actions of the fledgling Wall Street trader played by Charlie Sheen, who buys some paintings once he makes a little cash. For him, contemporary art is a status symbol with the same emotional resonance as his yupscale appliances: a sushi maker, a pasta machine and a Julian Schnabel all have the same psychic weight in his world.

For the evil Michael Douglas character, who sports his oversize Miró canvas in much the same manner as he sports oversize Havana cigars and oversize Paul Stuart suspenders, paintings are more than a mere fashion statement, they are the very essence of capitalism. "I paid $60,000 for this Miró, I can sell it for $600,000—it's just a capitalist illusion," he boasts. In the semiology of "art" movies, no one puts it more bluntly. Art is only worth what some schmuck will pay for it. That some contemporary artists—Andy Warhol and J.S.G. Boggs to name two—have replicated money and sold it as art seems too sophisticated a concept for a movie that doesn't want to examine the mystery of value but would rather damn the whole art enterprise as something counterfeit.

Art is counterfeit. Art is an item of bondage paraphernalia. Art is a commodity that can be manipulated. Art is a substance that is abused

In Manhattan, *Woody Allen and Diane Keaton stand in MOMA's sculpture garden. © 1979 United Artists, courtesy Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archives.*

Donald Sutherland as Paul Gauguin in a scene from Wolf at the Door. *© 1987 I.F.M., courtesy PMK.*

In An Unmarried Woman, *Jill Clayburgh carries a Paul Jenkins painting through the streets of SoHo. © 20th Century Fox.*

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What does the recurring theme of S & M mean in these recent Hollywood movies? That artists are in bondage to money? That humiliation is the fascination that artists exert over collectors?

Scene from **The Moderns** *showing Keith Carradine, an American painter in Paris, with his forgeries. ©1988 Alive Films, courtesy PMK.*

as recklessly as cocaine. Has any profession been so ruthlessly tarred in American movies? Can it get any worse than this?

Don't ask. Because the answer is yes. Take, for instance, *The Moderns*, a recently released movie set in 1926 Paris where, if you accept the film's ironic poses, members of The Lost Generation steal ideas and just about everything else from each other. Essentially, this is a film burlesquing the "appropriation" tactics of some postmodernist artists. Where those who appropriate might argue that they are examining a previous artistic style in a contemporary context, and thereby analyzing it, in *The Moderns*, appropriation is the last refuge of the forger. Keith Carradine plays an expatriate cartoonist (also a painter) who toils as a newspaper caricaturist. To make money, he agrees to forge some paintings by modern masters—a Cézanne bathers, a Matisse interior and a recumbent Modigliani nude that resembles a recumbent Joan Collins. (Note, please, that a famous forger, David Stein, is credited as the "artist" of the "Modigliani" and the "Matisse.")

The schmuck who pays for these frauds is John Lone, a nouveau-riche collector who doesn't know art, but knows that he likes the way art collectors have social cachet. The paintings are sold to him by corrupt dealer Genevieve Bujold, who passes them off as genuine in much the same way a corrupt jeweler gets $50,000 for a couple of zircons sold as diamonds. When the authenticity of the canvases is called into question, at a fashionable gallery opening, John Lone just shrugs; "Maybe I should frame the money I spent for them," he remarks, "that's what makes art important anyway." Then he slashes them, and tosses them in the fire. Meanwhile, Carradine's fakes go off to New York. (It should be noted that fire and slashing are the fate of paintings in "art" films from *The Light that Failed* through *The Moderns*. These actions express the triumph of philistinism over art. In *The Light that Failed* and *The Wolf at the Door*, the artist's dumb female model destroys his work in order to vent her anger at being subjugated to his whim. Yet, as a recurring act in these films, might not the savaging of paintings also symbolize the filmmakers' anger at being subjugated by high art?)

Surely no movie could be this cynical; surely *The Moderns*, which distills the heady themes of art-as-fraud, artist-as-caricaturist, art collector-as-climber and art dealer-as-exploiter, is being ironic about this? Unfortunately, the film must think irony is something you do to wrinkled shirts. Its coda has Keith Carradine looking at "his" Modigliani, Cézanne and Matisse hanging in the Museum of Modern Art. He's proud, he's vindicated as a serious artist, because through his "appropriation" he has enjoyed psychic communion with serious masters. In terms of this travesty, that's the best a contemporary artist can hope for in an art world where forgery is the only currency.

Over and over "art" movies tell us that art is a fraud. Is it artists who have changed, or is it only the artists in the movies? □

Author: *Carrie Rickey is the film critic for the* Philadelphia Inquirer.

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Sequined Simulacra

In their spring and summer '88 collections, Saint Laurent and Bill Blass showed clothes embroidered with reproductions of paintings by van Gogh and Matisse. Below, the author examines this art/fashion symbiosis.

BY AMY FINE COLLINS

Art and fashion have always fed on each other. Not only have artists from Pisanello to Picasso designed clothing, but dressmakers from Rose Bertin to Jean Patou have turned to historical or contemporary painting for inspiration. This year, two designers—Yves Saint Laurent and Bill Blass—took the art/fashion symbiosis to new extremes. Both couturiers included in their spring and summer 1988 collections evening wear beaded with facsimiles of well-known 20th-century pictures. Blass had his jackets, tops and skirts embroidered with replicas of some of the 1920s Matisse paintings exhibited last year at Washington's National Gallery. Saint Laurent produced two jackets embellished with van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and *Irises* of recent auction notoriety, and capes, suits and dresses adorned with less sensational motifs taken from Braque's works of the '40s and '50s. Lesage, the venerable Parisian embroidery house, whose clients have included most major couturiers of the last two centuries, executed the elaborate, labor-intensive and ultra-costly needlework for Saint Laurent. Blass's less technically perfect beading was done in India at considerably less expense.

Art and fashion, in the 1980s, are more than ever about big money. The two commodities compete with each other for status. Art has no practical value, but can appreciate, while clothing is functional but largely devoid of any real investment potential (the most paid at auction was £3,500 for a dress worn by Marilyn Monroe). Chanel once wittily juxtaposed fashion's instant allure with art's durability, saying, "Couture creates beautiful things that become ugly, while art creates ugly things that become beautiful."[1] Blass, who asserts that his Matisse outfits are "investment pieces—just as a painting would be,"[2] would like us to believe otherwise.

These days, art and fashion are among the conspicuous consumer's most avidly procured trophies. And what article of clothing could broadcast money more boisterously than a glittering Saint Laurent jacket modeled after one of the world's two most expensive paintings? For the wearer, the cachet of the *Irises* and *Sunflowers* jackets comes first from the designer's name; second, from the high-class craftsmanship of the tailoring and sumptuous embroidery; third, from the buyer's presumed knowledge of art (the minimum necessary to pass as cultured[3]); and finally, from the reflected golden glory of cash. For these garments come with price tags as impressive, in their way, as those attached to the van Gogh paintings—$85,000.

Yves Saint Laurent's 1988 van Gogh "Irises" jacket. Sequined embroidery by Lesage.

Mind-boggling as this price may seem, the cost is not purely arbitrary. The expense of Saint Laurent's tongue-in-cheek celebrations of luxe, art and beauty breaks down as follows: Lesage embroidered the sunflower jacket with 255,000 dazzling sequins and 46 feet of matching green and yellow silk ribbon. However, the production cost ($26,000) is due not to materials, but almost entirely to labor—600 hours of it (part of it in sampling). Lesage billed Saint Laurent for the finished work, and the designer's markup was roughly 300 percent. (All of these prices when translated into dollars are inflated by the unfavorable exchange rate.) François Lesage has said he pays 150 francs (about $30) an hour to his seamstresses, and he, too, charges triple his cost. His 90 highly skilled laborers (known as the "little hands"—an anatomical necessity for this kind of work) are thus paid reasonably well, and the House of Saint Laurent is reputed to pay the highest hourly rate in the industry.[4] No one, then, is really being exploited, but huge profits are being made. Sending his creations to India for beading kept the cost of Blass's Matisse tops and skirts down to a mere $5,000 to $7,000 (no figures for labor are available). And since Blass's clothes are ready-to-wear, they never, with or without embroidery, soar to the stratospheric price points of made-to-measure couture.

Interestingly, the prices of Saint Laurent's and Blass's chic salutes to wealth and privilege actually reflect the market value of the paintings reproduced. The *Sunflowers* and *Irises*, as the world well knows, went in March and November of 1987 for ca. $40 and $54 million respectively. But according to Christie's, the auction record for Matisse, set back in 1979 for *Portrait of a Young Sailor*, is a mere $1,716,000.

The advertisers and press understood perfectly how to promote these rarefied wares. Ads for Blass's Matisse items and a photo in a feature on Saint Laurent's Braque garments (in the French *Vogue* for March) presented the merchandise surrounded by carved, gilded frames. These clothes, the magazines imply, are priceless treasures "suitable for framing" and capable of turning the act of purchasing into an act of connoisseurship. (Gilt frames alone have become such signifiers of money and prestige that *New York* magazine recently reported the latest decorating trend in Paris is to hang groups of them sans pictures.) The Blass/Matisse and Saint Laurent/van Gogh clothes have about them such a pre-

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"Sunflowers" jacket designed by Saint Laurent for 1988 spring and summer collection.

cious-object aura that stylists for advertisements and magazines found it difficult to show women wearing them. Instead, they displayed them flung on chair backs (Blass ads), draped on dressmakers' dummies (Saint Laurent in the *Tatler*), or clutched to a model's bare bosom (Blass in American *Vogue*). If all this worshipfulness toward glitz and money was taken a little far, Blass, for one, now admits it. After showing his more restrained fall '88 collection, he reflected, "There was a fine edge of vulgarity creeping [into last season's designs]."[5]

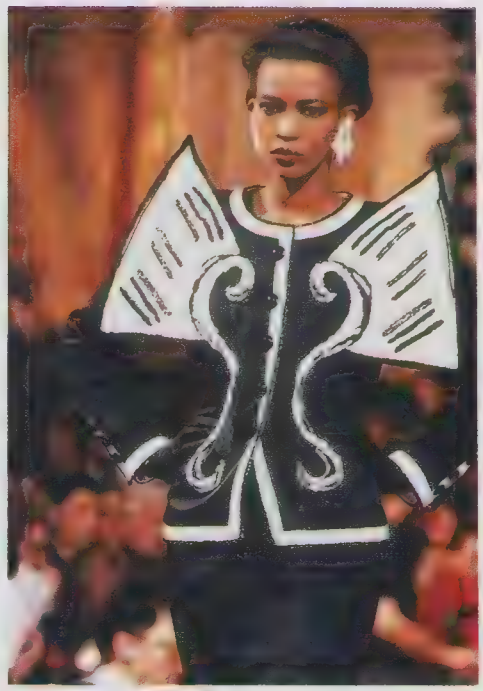
High fashion's recontextualization of van Gogh's and Matisse's paintings provides a chance to reevaluate them from a rather offbeat perspective: how do they cut it as clothes? It is, after all, not simply a question of reproducing the image, but of transposing it from two dimensions into three: a garment unlike a painting must move, have a back as well as a front, and be structured to accommodate the body. Saint Laurent understood better than Blass what would translate successfully into a bead-on-fabric medium. He chose two van Goghs whose all-over patterning made them as appropriate for dressmaking as any conventional floral print, and he disposed of details, such as the vase, which interfered with the flowers-by-the-yard effect. Adding to the appeal of his embroidered reinterpretations, the rough, glossy texture of the Lesage beading amusingly mimics the crusty sheen of van Gogh's thick impastos. The jacket thus substitutes its own charge for the original's. Saint Laurent is not the first designer over whom van Gogh's still lifes have exercised their flowery charms—Jacques Doucet, the couturier immortalized by Proust, once owned the *Irises*.

The prices of Saint Laurent's and Blass's chic salutes to wealth and privilege actually reflect the market value of the paintings.

Blass faced a more difficult problem—the reconstruction of entire interior scenes (including architectural elements, furniture, still life, landscape) meant to be as coherent and legible as the original paintings. Blass heightened Matisse's best-known traits almost to the point of caricature—colorism and luminosity become in his hands bewitching, jewel-rich flash. But unintentionally awkward, even surrealistic effects result: balustrades run across backs, floors cut through hips, windows "puncture" openings in the female body.

What finally does it say about the *Irises*, *Sunflowers* and Matisse's Nice pictures that they were adapted to this purpose? One can hardly imagine, say, Munch's *Scream* getting the same treatment, or even van Gogh's and Matisse's more unsettling works—the *Potato Eaters* or *Mlle. Yvonne Landsberg*, for example. The *Sunflowers* and *Irises* are among van Gogh's least difficult works, because as still lifes, they are less prone to the artist's wildly expressive distortions, which can become insupportably wrenching in portraits and even landscapes. By now much of van Gogh's work, like Saint Laurent's clothes, has come to represent safely elegant, blue-chip taste. As Kenneth Silver has shown, the Matisse Nice pictures used by Blass were already conservative, stylish and expensive when they were made. These languorous bourgeois scenes present Matisse at his most unthreatening, and so suit "the taste of the current,

Ad for Bill Blass top with sequined reproduction of Matisse painting. Photo Jesse Gerstein.



Braque-inspired suit by Saint Laurent for 1988 spring and summer collection.

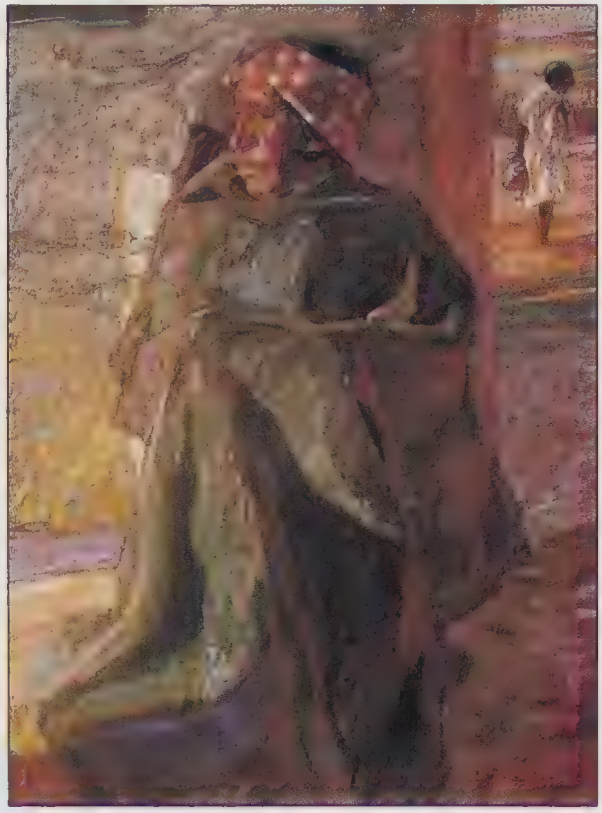
politically conservative moment for both luxury and conformism" [see *A.i.A.*, June '87].

These fashions, dependent on borrowed glamour, celebrate art as a symbol of indolent comfort and private wealth (few of the Matisse pictures from this period, and of course neither of the van Goghs, are in public hands). Can this trend go further? Will collectors commission Lesage-embroidered versions of their favorite treasures? Will women wishing to pass as old-money collectors or art cognoscenti demand to wear paintings on their backs? Balzac knew the profound correspondence between what we wear and what we desire: "The question of costume is one of enormous importance for those who wish to appear to have what they do not have, because that is often the best way of getting it later on."[6] □

1. Quoted in Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 10.
2. "View: State of the Art," *Vogue*, Feb. 1988.
3. Many of those attending Saint Laurent's spring show, however, mistook the Braque clothes for homages to Picasso. See, for example, Bernadine Morris, "Marriage of Fashion and Art by Saint Laurent," *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1988. p. C1.
4. The information about cost comes from Jennet Conant with Megan Dissly, "Everything that Glitters," *Newsweek*, Apr. 18, 1988, p. 78; from Stephen Gold's PBS documentary, *Haute Couture: The Great Designers;* and from Steele, *Paris Fashion*, p. 279. (Thanks to Jane Page for calling my attention to Gold's film, and for discussing the subject in general with me.)
5. Michael Gross, "The Frill Is Gone," *New York Times*, May 2, 1988, p. 24.
6. Honoré de Balzac, *Lost Illusions*; quoted in Steele, *Paris Fashion*.

Author: *Amy Fine Collins is an art historian now teaching at Parsons.*

GEORGE CARLSON. *I'm The Drum*. Bronze Heroic 10 feet



GEORGE CARLSON. *Luis*. Pastel, 27¼ x 20½ inches. 1987

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In Sum: Corporate Support for Art

The American corporation is now the biggest single contributor to the financial well-being of the arts in this country. What does business gain from this munificence? Is there a quid pro quo? And what about the October crash? Read on.

BY IAIN PEARS

One of the most remarkable developments in the past 20 years has been the rise of corporate patronage of the arts in the U.S. From being at best a patchy and unreliable means of support to artists and museums, it has, in the 1970s and '80s, turned into a major sub-industry and a vital source of income for those groups. Figures are uncertain, as corporations tend to be reluctant to disclose just how much they give away in this fashion. However, the Business Committee on the Arts, a loose affiliation of corporate art sponsors, estimated that total corporate support topped $600 million in 1984, while total donations for the period 1967–86 were around $5.3 billion. The figure compares with under $30 million in 1967. If commissions and collecting, together with a host of small help-in-kind donations, are also figured in, the grand total now is probably nudging the billion-a-year mark. Such estimates as exist suggest that museums, the most popular beneficiaries of this largesse, receive about 19 percent of the total, indicating that they have collectively been given slightly over a billion dollars since 1967.

Such sums now make Corporate USA the biggest single entity contributing to the financial well-being of the arts in this country, more important than the individual states or Washington. It is possible that this corporate presence will become even greater in the next few years, even if, in real terms, individual businesses do not continue to increase their donations, for while corporations have notched up ever larger profits in the boom years of Ronald Reagan's presidency, the government has developed a budget deficit crisis that almost guarantees federal cutbacks in the future.

It should of course be pointed out that the waning of governmental enthusiasm for the arts is not merely the result of financial stringency. President Reagan's Committee on the Arts and Humanities formed on June 15, 1982 read "like a who's who of the American corporate community," and from the outset took the view that federal disengagement was desirable. "Ten or twenty years ago, the starting point was, 'What should the government do for the arts?' Now the question is, 'Why should the federal government become involved?' "[1]

A few years back, the increasingly corporate nature of arts subsidies was almost entirely an American phenomenon, but now the U.S. experience is also becoming a model for other countries. Britain under Margaret Thatcher has whittled away the budget of the Arts Council. France, Italy and West Germany have begun to follow a similar route, as political leaders increasingly exhort museums and arts organizations to fend for themselves.[2]

Consequently, many museums are now more heavily dependent on corporate support than ever before. According to Sue Dorm, deputy director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, corporate donations will probably make up around a third of the museum's $3.3 million annual fund. What's more, donations for special projects—in addition, that is, to general subsidies—must also be counted in. Even in the case of smaller museums like the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, around 100 corporations in 1986 contributed a total of $1.1 million. This, according to director Mark Wilson, is less than a tenth of the total budget, but it nonetheless dwarfs the combined amount produced by the state and federal governments.

To get some idea of whether corporate support will continue to grow, it is important to understand why corporations patronize the arts in the first place. The benefits, after all, are difficult to quantify. Moreover, many potential critics—from disgruntled stockholders to corporate raiders—will single out any example of not clearly profitable expenditure as a way of assaulting the management. By their very nature, after all, businesses require a periodic reexamination of company goals and of the means used to achieve them. The pattern—not surprisingly but not inevitably, either—seems to be that in the days of bull and boom, companies tend to be expansive, seeing their role in broadly social terms and making use of a range of ameliorative programs to enhance their public image. When times turn tough, however, greater concentration is naturally devoted to the central aim of industry, which is to maximize profits. Typically, in such circumstances, all expenditure not immediately aimed at bettering the bottom line comes under greater scrutiny and is subject to assault.

However, why companies believe they should support the arts now, when they rarely did so a quarter of a century ago, is a more confusing issue. The usual argument is that, in essence, the corporations are "doing well by doing good," an interpretation supported by both givers and receivers. Briefly put, this doctrine states that as the arts themselves have attained greater public status and visibility, companies involved in their support gain commensurately greater (if usually intangible) benefits by involving themselves as visibly as possible in their "promotion." Thus, the boost in the value of the Equitable Tower in Manhattan because of the presence of a branch of the Whitney on the first floor was a welcome bonus, but probably not the main goal of the planners when they came up with the idea.[3]

A key element for both sides of the relationship is to stress reciprocity, the idea that sponsorship is a "value for value exchange."[4] Museums want others to accept that they are not getting a free lunch, while corporations are equally reluctant to appear as if they are giving one. So, in exchange for their financial help, corporations point to such benefits as free entry for their staff and emphasize that donations boost their image as good corporate citizens. "The corporation gives money to the arts, and the arts give back some image or enhancement to the corporation's identity."[5] In all the very considerable literature on the subject, I have never seen a single example of a company saying that it gives the money away because it wants to, whether it receives benefits or not. There is, it seems, nothing that alarms a corporation more than the accusation of being altruistic.

In a cynical age replete with suspicion about the motives of businessmen, not only is corporate self-interest expected, but any deviation therefrom is likely to raise still greater trepidation. Whether you are a firebrand critic of corporate sponsorship, like the artist Hans Haacke [see *A.i.A.*, Feb. '88], or a more distanced observer of the phenomenon, there is an almost natural tendency to assume that a businessman possesses superhuman cunning that allows him to see everything in terms of the bottom line. Thus, it seems difficult to believe a corporation would ever waste money by giving it away without getting a satisfactory return. The more intangible the return, the more likely it is that motives of an as-yet-unimagined unscrupulousness will be attributed to the perpetrator. Corporations themselves collude in this fantasy of malign omniscience by fostering—primarily, one imagines, for themselves—the notion that there are no lapses in their hard-bitten calculation, so that they rarely refer to their interest in the arts without, at some stage, dropping into the language of cost-benefit analysis.

But it may with reason be doubted that this laboriously maintained image is the whole story. Companies do not, of course, always restrain their desire for simple product advertisement,

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witness Philip Morris's hawking of free cigarettes around the Vatican exhibition and others it has sponsored. In general, however, such crudities are avoided in favor of more subtle means of self-promotion. Sponsorship of the arts falls more into the area of "image marketing" in which the aim is to sell the company rather than what it makes or does. Nor are corporations and the people who run them automata, preprogrammed to seek a single and clearly defined goal. They misjudge their own interests, confuse personal wishes with the corporate good and, like everyone else, have egos demanding a goodly share of gratification—if not more. Some two decades ago J.K. Galbraith developed the idea of "the approved contradiction" in modern business. According to this theory, corporations must contend with the built-in problem that the people in charge of maximizing profits—the management—have no great personal interest in doing so, as it is not they but the stockholders who generally receive the ensuing material benefits. Accordingly, management tends to use the resources they control for more personal gratification, turning to their own ends such perquisites as executive golf courses, personal jets or, if their taste tends in that direction, art sponsorship, which brings senior management a *personal* reputation for refinement as well as contact with the artistic and social beau monde.

A clear testament to the element of ego in art patronage is the frequency with which chief executive officers—some major stockholders, others not—like to be associated personally with their corporation's artistic endeavors. As *Business Week* noted more than a decade ago, the decision to collect or become a patron tends to start on a personal whim of the president or chairman. Only later, when the scheme matures, are departments set up to handle money and curators hired to look after collections.[6] In many cases the identification of a chairman, rather than the company, as the starting point of sponsorship and patronage is very marked, as has been the case with David Rockefeller at Chase Manhattan, Donald Burnham at General Electric, Thomas J. Watson at IBM or George Weissman at Philip Morris.

The extraordinary frequency with which executives compare their art projects to great historical examples is a further indication that at some level they entertain fairly grand ideas about their activities. The first great document on business sponsorship, the speech by David Rockefeller that led to the founding of the Business Committee on the Arts, began with a reference to Cosimo de' Medici,[7] and, since then, references to the Florentine patrons—with the occasional nod towards Louis XIV as well[8]—crop up with monotonous regularity. No less often, however, the pose struck derives from the philosophy of social responsibility developed in the 1930s, according to which the sponsorship of art is justified, indeed necessary, because "American business is becoming a logical inheritor of America's social and cultural conscience."[9]

In all the literature on the subject, I've never once seen a company say it gives away the money because it wants to, regardless of benefits. Nothing, it seems, alarms a company more than the accusation of altruism.

The upshot in any case seems clear: now that many museums have become dependent on corporate donations, they could run into serious trouble if the flow of funds is reduced. Whether such a reduction is not already in the offing is the subject of some debate. While no museum contacted for this article was worried by its level of corporate donations, and many said they had noticed no downturn recently, it is possible that corporate donations may well have peaked. According to Joel Dein of the Business Committee on the Arts, some 20 members of its central organization have dropped out in the past few years, either because they have axed their patronage programs or because of corporate takeovers. The drop in oil prices, he says, has made many oil companies revise their priorities, and both Exxon and Mobil, two of the biggest sponsors, now give less than before.

The computer industry has likewise been going through hard times, so the companies in that sector have also trimmed their budgets. "We're still heavily involved, but . . . generally we found that as business turned down, we cut back in lots of areas," commented IBM's director of cultural programs, Richard Berglund. He estimated that IBM's contributions to the arts dropped some 15 percent in 1987 and will fall further this year.

In the financial sector as well, the money is not flowing quite as freely as in the past. It is common practice for companies to calculate their level of donations to all sectors—housing, education, the arts and so on—as a percentage of after-tax profits, with something around the 1 percent level being the favored apportionment. Clearly, if profits drop, donations may do likewise. So far, companies are apparently not sufficiently alarmed to apply this rule of thumb too rigorously. Chase Manhattan, for example, returned a loss for the 1987 year, but only cut back on its philanthropic activities by 10 percent.

However, according to Philadelphia Museum president, Robert Montgomery Scott, there *is* one sector where corporate fund-raising has been noticeably trimmed: the area of specific projects and exhibitions. "That's getting harder and harder," he commented. "The cost of a major national exhibition has become astounding." This drop-off in support has been most evident in the case of the blockbuster show, a phenomenon of the past quarter century that has included such exhibitions as the Tutankhamen artifacts and continued through to vast displays like the National Gallery's "Treasure Houses of Britain" in 1985–86. The rising costs of such extravaganzas can easily be seen in the sums—whether they represent all or part of a given show's price tag—contributed by corporate sponsors: Exxon Corporation provided $1 million for Tutankhamen back in the '70s; Philip Morris paid $3.5 million for the Metropolitan's "Vatican Collections" in 1983; estimates for Ford Motor's subsidy of the "Treasure Houses" hovered around $5 million. "Price tags are becoming bigger, insurance premiums are going up, budgets are going way up. You have to think hard before you commit large amounts of money," commented Philip Morris's director of cultural and contributions program, Stephanie French.

Similarly, although IBM was once interested in blockbusters—it put up some $750,000 for "Treasures of Dresden"—it is now unlikely to repeat the experiment. "Many exhibitions are escalating in cost," Berglund said. "We would not want to put all of our support into two or three major projects with very high tabs. So we're unlikely to put it into blockbusters."

It is often assumed that a corporation likes nothing better than to see its name linked with a flashy exhibition of the sort that has a would-be audience continuously lined up around the block. "[Blockbusters are] good for the corporate image because they show that business is looking after the man in the street who isn't attending sports events."[10] Increasingly, though, companies are consciously decentralizing their arts budgets, according to Nelson-Atkins director Wilson, and are giving funding responsibilities to subsidiaries or regional offices so as to spread contributions around their geographical areas of operation. Accordingly, the number of companies with a central pool of resources to pour into one large show is diminishing. "We could easily spend all our budget in New York City if we wanted to, but we try to distribute our support geographically," says IBM's Berglund.

What's more, to the degree that the megashow is now an endangered species, considerable responsibility must be laid at the feet of the museums themselves. Partially because they wish to provide what they think their corporate sponsors want, but far more tellingly because of the competitive dynamics of the publicity-conscious museum world, an exhibition that does not attract descriptions such as "stunning," "lavish" and "spectacular" from reviewers is often considered to be a comparatively unimportant thing, whatever thought, care and attention has gone into it. Museums, especially the exceptionally large ones, routinely allow themselves every luxury, whether in the form of ever-more grandiose catalogues, lavishly decorated rooms or sheer number of exhibits.

Every bit as much as corporations, museums and museum directors like to make a splash, to put on a show that will be described as "the most fabulous exhibition that has ever been done in any museum anywhere in the world."[11] Where directors were once happy to be known for their connoisseurship or their scholarly abilities, many

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now prefer to be thought of as aggressive, dynamic "personalities." Consequently, expansion of their museum fiefdoms—along with the funds to permit perpetual growth—has become an ever more important aim. After all, support comes most readily to those who are demonstrably successful, and there are few better indices of success than an expensive new building or the hosting of blockbuster exhibitions.

It is easy enough to see how this situation has prompted fears that the influx of corporate money may somehow "corrupt" museums, though a closer look will make it evident that such fears are misplaced. According to the pessimistic view, the corporation will slowly take over its ward and, by virtue of its own financial muscle, gradually warp the museum's vision so that its primary concern becomes the glorification of the corporation rather than the celebration of art or the education of the public.

The careful researcher can, indeed, find occasions where corporations have interefered in museum affairs more than was appropriate and even instances when the giving or withholding of funds might have amounted to a form of censorship. But such occasions appear to be rare, and in concentrating on them one misses the larger point. Sponsorship of the arts is part of an ideological belief in freedom and creativity; to identify corporations as the underwriters and protectors of that belief and its fruits is to distinguish the West from other parts of the world. Although corporations are more than willing to look after their own interests and often dislike criticism enormously, on the whole they subscribe without any hypocrisy to this ideology of freedom, since indeed their own unhampered functioning is dependent upon it. Thus, however self-serving they may be in attempting to associate themselves with Western liberal values, it seems merely logical that they genuinely believe these values exist and have some merit.[12] Consequently, by extension, corporate art patronage may be seen as in some measure responsible for the actual preservation of political freedom as well. For example, corporate aims in patronage are achieved by ostentatiously *avoiding* censorship, rather than by crude—and inevitably ineffective—attempts to manipulate specificities of taste and expression. Thus, for every company like IBM which "would never sponsor anything way out"[13] there are many more who, like Philip Morris, say they are perfectly happy to be associated with avant-garde exhibitions.

Nor, on the whole, do corporations need to worry about the possibility of museums serving as conduits for criticism seriously damaging to the corporations' self-interest, however that may be defined. After all, a sizable number of senior museum officials derive from the same cadre that fills the boardrooms and are, as a result, broadly in tune with what the corporations themselves hope to accomplish. Ever since the worldwide boom in museum attendance began in the 1960s, museum directors in dozens of countries have shown themselves more than willing to adapt to the new circumstances and have "corporatized" themselves without any prodding from outside influences. Even before the rise of corporate sponsorship, many museums—such as the Metropolitan, or the Victoria & Albert in London—were independently developing methods of marketing and self-promotion that would have been acceptable to corporate management anywhere.

Since then, this "corporatization" of museums has continued apace. The top post at the Philadelphia Museum is now an administrative one—"President and Chief Executive Officer"; and in museums, as in many other educational institutions, administrative ability and skills at fundraising are valued increasingly highly. There are few major museums now that do not have their own marketing departments or that fail to see the virtues of advertising. Curators solicit funds from the private sector not with reluctance and foreboding, but with eagerness to win an ever-bigger proportion of what is available, even when they voice occasional doubts about the wisdom of their acts.[14] Museums have always been part of the establishment, and in the U.S. throughout this century, that has always meant a strong input from business. Local industrialists were often the moving forces behind the founding of museums, and the successors continue to sit as trustees.

Since the mid-19th century, however, the trend has been toward an ever-greater centralization of the arts. Most of the great national museums were founded or reorganized during this period; huge sums of taxpayers' money were spent on collections to fill them. Since World War II, the reach of the state has stretched still further, with nearly all European and North American states having some form of central financial organization to subsidize theaters, orchestras, artists, writers and actors. The present apparent reversal of this historically novel trend must be viewed with the greatest seriousness, since, as we have seen, it is neither value-neutral nor just a substitute source of money: indeed, it represents nothing less than a shift in power relations within the superstructure of Western politics. Even if corporate commitment to the arts does falter in the next few years, there is little sign that governments of any Western country will be willing to step in to fill the breach. It may even be that eventually the phenomenon of state intervention will be viewed merely as a transitory phase that flourished briefly before the tradition of private support reasserted itself. □

1. Commission member Ralph Saul, quoted in *Horizon*, July/Aug. 1986, p. 35.
2. See, for example, the *New York Times*, May 13, 1986.
3. "An Equitable Relationship," *Art in America*, May 1986, p. 117.
4. Photographer Gary Beydler, quoted in *Art News*, May 1979, p. 46.
5. Alan Toman, President of Marketing Department Inc., quoted in *Horizon*, Oct. 1985, p. 80.
6. *Business Week*, quoting a survey conducted at Boston University, Dec. 15, 1973, p. 86.
7. David Rockefeller, "Culture and the Corporation," speech to the National Industrial Conference Board, New York, 50th anniversary conference, Sept. 20, 1966.
8. Pepsico Chairman Donald M. Kendall, on the company's sculpture garden: "We're gonna turn that cow pasture into a new Versailles," quoted in *Fortune*, May 25, 1987, p. 106.
9. *Involving the Arts in Marketing*, Business Committee for the Arts, Inc.
10. Anonymous corporate commentator, *American Artist*, Jan. 1981, p. 12ff.
11. Curator at the "Treasure Houses of Britain" exhibition, quoted in the *Washington Post*, Jan. 27, 1985.
12. For one of the most thoughtful discussions on this point see Brian Wallis, "The Art of Big Business," *Art in America*, June 1986.
13. *American Artist*, Jan. 1981, p. 12ff.
14. Such as Metropolitan director Philippe de Montebello, quoted in the *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 1985.

Author: *Iain Pears has been a Getty Fellow in the Arts and Humanities at Yale, and also a part-time Senior Corporate Correspondent for Reuters.*

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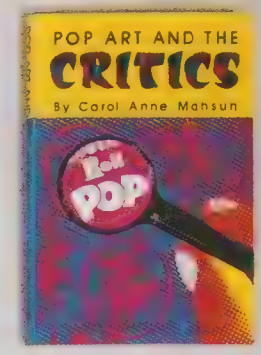

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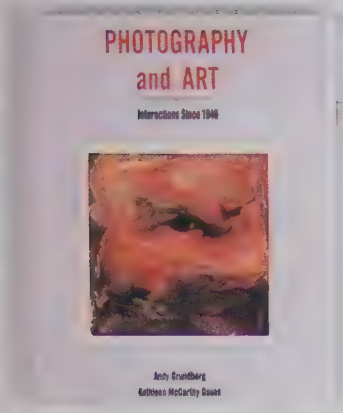

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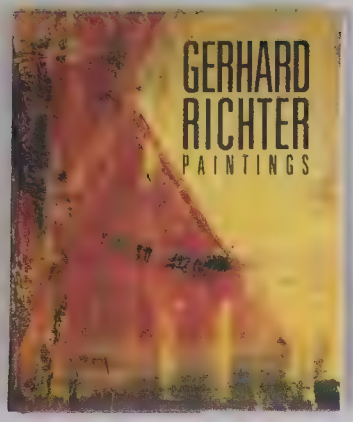

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By Kim Levin (Harper & Row)

Beyond Modernism is a provocative and perceptive commentary on the art and artists of the last two decades and offers a current perspective on the end of modernism. Among the artists and issues addressed in the 29 essays are: the new German painting, southern California art and artists, Lichtenstein, Rosenquist and Warhol in the '80s, video art, Basquiat and Post-Graffiti, Hesse, Beuys, Schnabel, Salle, Taaffe, Bleckner, and Koons. Author Kim Levin, art critic for *The Village Voice*, says "... the pieces document what seemed at the end of the '70s to be the emergence of a new era, but now looks more like the waning of the old one. The perspective has shifted: the prefix of choice in the '70s was *post*; in the '80s it's been *neo*." With 44 illustrations.

2

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Richard Serra
By Ernst-Gerhard Guse with contributions by Jean-Christophe Amman, Yve-Alain Bois, Douglas Crimp, and Armin Zweite. (Rizzoli)

Since the 1960s Richard Serra's monumental sculptures have provoked controversy in the art community. This monograph, an anthology of essays by an impressive, international group of critics addresses the multitude of reactions and the complex intellectual background behind Serra's work. Published to coincide with a European exhibition, the book includes among its 300 illustrations a series presenting for the first time Serra's latest installation in Munich. Working primarily with enormous steel plates, Serra creates abstract, sculptural "anti-environments". For its comprehensiveness and insightful critical essays this volume is the essential work on Richard Serra, considered by many to be the most important sculptor of his generation.

3

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Pop Art and the Critics
by Carol Anne Mashun (UMI)

The relationship between the critical world and pop art is examined in this first comprehensive study. Clearly and thoughtfully, Mashun analyzes the problems encountered in defining and interpreting pop art and offers a compelling view of the strength and passion of the movement and its impact on the art of the '80s. Pop art broke away from previous critical categories and assumptions to enter into a dialogue with criticism itself. The author examines the writings of the critics who represent the major voices of the movement, including: Lawrence Alloway, Umberto Eco, Clement Greenberg, Allan Kaprow, Max Kozloff, Donald Kuspit, Barbara Rose and Susan Sontag.

4

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This volume, published to accompany a major touring exhibition organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and currently showing at the Des Moines Art Center traces the emergence of photography as a vital force in contemporary art since the end of World War II. This history reveals how photography has interacted with modern painting and sculpture in each of the art movements of the last 40 years. *Photography and Art* examines the work of more than 100 artists who have expanded the definition of photography and used the medium to make art. Also addressed here is the enormous influence of photographic imagery and photography's function as a purveyor of mass-media images on the traditional arts of painting, drawing, and sculpture. How the functions and uses of photographic images have been expanded, altered, and reconsidered since 1946 is clearly explored in this beautifully illustrated book.

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This volume is published to accompany an important architectural exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art which examines current developments in architecture. *Deconstructivist Architecture* focuses on the emergence of a new sensibility in architecture. These projects continue the experimentation with structure initiated by the Russian Constructivists in the 1920's, but here the original goal of perfection is subverted. The exhibition focuses on seven international architects who are obsessed by twisted shapes, warped planes, and folded lines and who intentionally violate the pure forms of modern architecture. Drawings, models, and works by Coop Himmelblau, Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Zaha M. Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind, and Bernard Tschumi are reproduced in this important publication.

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Fabrications: Staged, Altered, and Appropriated Photographs
By Anne H. Hoy (Abbeville)

This first large survey of fabricated photography presents the work of 58 American and European artist-photographers whose images challenge all conventions. Some, like Cindy Sherman and William Wegman, reinvent portraiture by creating fictional personalities. Artists as dissimilar as Barbara Kasten and James Casebere create still lifes of all types. Joel-Peter Witkin and Laurie Simmons create narrative tableaux whether shocking, poignant, or mysterious. Appropriators, Barbara Kruger and Richard Prince, critique the icons of contemporary society. David Hockney produces unique images by manipulating the physical elements of photography. Rejecting traditional views of the camera as an objective recording device these artists have produced pictures that "represent the most inventive movement in photography in the last twenty years" asserts author Anne H. Hoy, curator at the International Center of Photography.

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Gerhard Richter: Paintings
Texts by I. Michael Danoff and Roald Nasgaard (Thames and Hudson)

Gerhard Richter is one of Europe's most significant figures in contemporary art. This volume, published to coincide with a major touring retrospective exhibition company organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, surveys the work of an artist of unusual complexity whose painting mirrors the developments and issues of the international art scene for the past 30 years. The 77 major works reproduced here reflect Richter's constant exploration from his early paintings copying amateur snapshots and newspaper photos, through his formally reductive work of the late 1960s and early 1970s, to his more recent large abstract paintings, multi-faceted and overflowing with color. The book includes an interview with Richter by Benjamin H. Buchloh and excerpts from the artist's writings

8

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Europe Now: Contemporary Creation in Western Europe
Essays by Amnon Barzel, Henry Geldzahler, Joseph Kosuth, Donald Kuspit, Thomas M. Messer, et al. (Centro D-Electa)

This volume is the catalogue of the inaugural exhibition of the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Prato, Italy, one mile outside Florence. The museum, opening June 25, is unique in Italy for its exhibition and acquisition programs which will focus exclusively on the art of the last decade. *Europe Now*, the catalogue for a major exhibition, includes the work of 33 artists from 10 European countries, providing an overview of the diversity of recent European art. This survey of 280 pages and 90 color illustrations includes a special project and an essay by each artist followed by recent work. Among the artists included are John Armeleder, Joseph Beuys, Francesco Clemente, Tony Cragg, Enzo Cucchi, Jiri Dokoupil, Anish Kapoor, Mimmo Paladino, Gerhard Richter and Gilberto Zorio.

9

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Willem de Kooning
By Diane Waldman (Abrams)

Thomas Hess wrote of him, "De Kooning is one of the great inventors of forms of the twentieth century", and Harold Rosenberg called him "the foremost painter of the postwar world." The art of Willem de Kooning comprises an extraordinary body of work that spans more than 60 years of continuing innovation and investigation. *Willem De Kooning* is the newest title in the distinguished Library of American Art series which are published with the National Museum of American Art of the Smithsonian Institution. In the most comprehensive study to date, Diane Waldman, Deputy Director of the Guggenheim Museum, offers a perceptive critical essay on the artist's career and a selection of the artist's most important work. Waldman traces de Kooning's stylistic evolution from his first figurative paintings of the 1920s to his famous black and white paintings and the notorious Woman series. The later abstract landscapes are discussed in depth, as well as the development of an important body of sculpture in the 1970s and his masterful late paintings of the 1970s and 80s.

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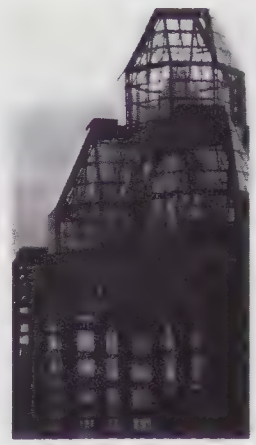

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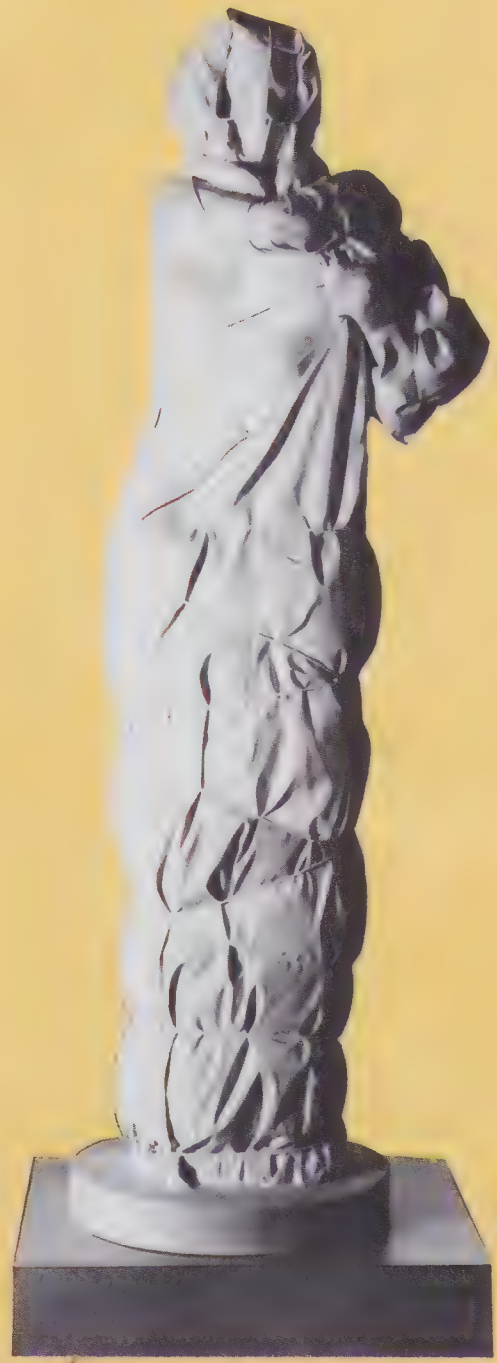

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The Marriage of Art and Money

Chris Burden's In Venice Money Grows on Trees *(one hundred dollar bills glued to two palm trees) performed on Oct. 6, 1978 in Venice, Calif. Photo courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.*

Arguing that the commodity value of an art work and its esthetic value are deeply intertwined, the author offers a short history of attitudes towards art in the marketplace. Plus interviews with art dealers.

BY CARTER RATCLIFF

The Whole Business of Man Is The Arts.
—William Blake, *The Laocoön,* ca. 1820

The chief business of the American people is business.
—Calvin Coolidge, 1925

Imagine that art and money are characters in a novel. If they were to marry, which novelist would best convey the motives of their union? Henry James, undeniably, for he understood that marriage is a market transaction, and that no market, not even the most crass, confines itself to monetary exchange. A financial deal always has an aspect of the social, in the large and the small senses of that word, and the social entails the esthetic. James's heroes and heroines often read like allegorical figures of art and money, nowhere more clearly than in *The American* (1879), the story of Christopher Newman, who comes out of nowhere and makes a fortune, chiefly in copper. By the age of 35 he has accumulated so much money that more would be pointless, so he sails to Europe.

In the Old World, Newman visits churches—470 of them, roughly—and contemplates marriage. As he says in Chapter Three, "I have succeeded, and now what am I to do with my success? To make it perfect, as I see it, there must be a beautiful woman perched on the pile"—i.e., on his money—"like a statue on a monument. She must be as good as she is beautiful, and as clever as she is good. . . . I want to possess, in a word, the best article on the market." If Newman gets his wish, he will acquire not merely a distinguished wife but a living art work, a statue marking the pinnacle of a fortune so monumental it has its own esthetic aspect. I believe James means us to understand that, like the western prairies, the American's money is sublime in its vastness. Newman zeros in on Madame de Cintré, an aristocratic young widow endowed with complex and subtle loveliness. Their marriage would join the sublime and the beautiful, an esthetic event so devoutly to be wished that when Newman's proposal is accepted he seems to have achieved the ultimate coup, a deal so gloriously profitable that it transmutes money, mere lucre, into something ethereal—a medium not of exchange but of life lived as if it were a work of art.

Though some characters in the story believe in this transformation, the hero, as far as I can tell, does not. James appears to let Newman understand that he can move from one market to another, but never escape the realm of the economic. To belong to Western culture, in the Old World or the New, is to compete. Four years as a Civil War officer left Newman "with an angry, bitter sense of the waste of precious things—life and time and money and 'smartness' and early freshness of purpose; and he had addressed himself to the pursuits of peace with eagerness and zest." He turned from military competition, which tears things down, to the commercial kind, which builds them up. However, on a trip to New York to clinch a bit of particularly sharp dealing, he suddenly feels "a mortal disgust for the thing I was going to do. . . . I couldn't tell the meaning of it; I only felt that I loathed the whole business and wanted to wash my hands of it." So he travels to Europe to find a third market, the one where Madame de Cintré, an allegorical figure of art, is the prize offered for successful competition.

In his art criticism, James writes of portraits and landscapes as if he were describing the characters of his novels and supplying them with scenic backdrops. The most refined of James's invented personages are emblems of art, and he wrote that art works are at their best when they emblemize people.[1] James's novels join with his criticism to suggest that emblems of both sorts take their value from marketplace transactions, some delicate and others not. In James's *The Awkward Age* (1899), toward the end of Book I, a character says that "in London. . . . staring, glaring, obvious, knock-down beauty, as plain as a poster on a wall, an advertisement of soap or whiskey, something that speaks to the crowd and crosses the foot-lights, fetches such a price in the market that the absence of it . . . constitutes . . . a sort of social bankruptcy."

This is brutal commentary and not applicable now precisely as it was in James's day. The economics of marriage and of personal image have changed. Nonetheless, his narratives still convince with their arguments that individuals are economic units, that every variety of meaning and value is generated by market transactions. Though Christopher Newman's aristocratic in-laws are particularly good at calculating the rates of exchange that transform cash into supra-monetary value, that knack is not the exclusive property of their class. William Blake, a social and esthetic radical shunted to the margins of the English art world, worked out such transactions with minute care. He began his annotations to the *Discourses* of Joshua Reynolds by announcing: "This Man was Hired to Depress Art"—with emphasis on the word "Hired." Blake saw the Academy as a monopoly that prevented deserving artists from finding their way to a fair market. Isolated from patronage, Blake devised complex strategies to compensate him, in imagination, for his hardships. Always in need of money, he never gave up hope for "a Fair Price & Proportionate Value & a General Demand for Art"[2] from a public somehow made indifferent to the snobbish authority of aristocractic connoisseurs.

When the hope of a fair market collapses, artists sometimes affect scorn for money. In our century Futurists ranted against "the slovenly and facile commercialism which makes the work of our most highly respected artists throughout Italy worthy of contempt"; Francis Picabia led the Dadas in their assault on "this odious trade: Selling art expensively"; André Breton tried to encourage the artist who works to satisfy not his need for money but "the personal needs of his mind." Offended by Salvador Dali's commercial shenanigans, Breton dubbed him "Avida Dollars" and expelled him from the Surrealist movement.[3] In the 20th century, whenever art and money threatened to marry, certain avant-gardists militantly refused to hold their peace. Despite their objections, the works of the European art movements—including products of the most violently anti-market stances—became valuable commodities. So did paintings and sculptures by the leading New York School artists, among them Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and others who nurtured phobias about selling out.

Pop artists sold well and seemed not to object. Taking consumer products as subject matter, their works gave those products back to the culture at large as images aglow with the aura of fine art. In a bliss of willful ignorance about compunctions that had tormented

artists for more than a century, Andy Warhol reconciled Blake and Calvin Coolidge with the remark that "Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art."[4] During the '60s, devotees of Pop art enjoyed a utopian state of affairs, a giddy sense of a world—or at least a world of images—made right by a union of art and money that appeared to degrade neither party. Things were not so simple for admirers of Color-Field painting.

Clement Greenberg's criticism didn't so much establish a credible rate for the exchange of money and "correct" pictorial form as it defined "correct" form as utterly pure, hence impossible to conceive in even the most tenuous relationship with money. Thought on the subject was—officially, at least—extinguished, so sales could go forward without a thought, or at least none for the difficult meanings stirred up by the marketplace. That Greenberg served—unofficially—as a sort of dealer-curator made matters all the simpler. The power broker who issued pronouncements on "quality" also stood ready to assure collectors that certain paintings were extremely good buys. As members of the Color-Field salon assumed a posture of condescending distaste for the marketplace where Greenberg's judgments were, for a time, so persuasive, others on other scenes began cranking up the horror of lucre to the point where it inspired a new vision of art somehow freed from commerce.

In 1965 Barbara Rose praised Minimalist objects that "blatantly assert their unsaleability and functionlessness, . . . difficult, hostile, awkward and oversize" art works that flaunt a "refusal to participate, either as entertainment or as whimsical ingratiating commodity (being simply too big or too graceless or too empty or too boring to appeal)."[5] Minimalism displayed a strong and almost immediate market appeal, however, suggesting that collectors could not be deterred even by an object's complete lack of qualities traditionally thought seductive. So, a new tactic was proposed: art must fend off commerce by displacing esthetic intent from the object to something less substantial. Antimarket radicals imagined—or put on a good show of imagining—that with none of the usual goods to sell, the market could no longer impose a money taint on the artist's work.

In 1969 the Kunsthalle in Bern sponsored "When Attitudes Become Form," an exhibition with a motto: "Live in your head." Scott Burton's catalogue essay suggested that "art and ideas are becoming indistinguishable."[6] Concept, in other words, was replacing thing. Kynaston McShine wrote of the artists included in the "Information" show he organized for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1970, that they employ "concepts . . . broader and more cerebral than the expected 'product' of the studio. . . . they are interested in ways of rapidly exchanging ideas, rather than embalming the idea in an 'object.' "[7] Moving at the speed of thought, the new art would not—could not—be snared by market mechanisms.

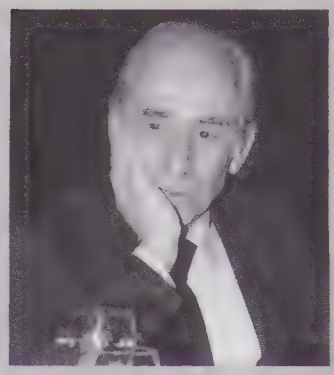
Of course the "Attitudes" show in Bern included plenty of salable work—paintings by Robert Ryman and Richard Tuttle, sculpture by Richard Serra. Featuring Rafael Ferrer's blocks of ice and scads of scruffily typewritten pages by Barry Le Va, Sol LeWitt and others, "Information" looked more resistant to commerce—but only at first glance. Not long into the 1970s, a bustling market for ostensibly unmarketable art works developed, as buyers developed a taste for the texts of the Conceptual artists and the photographic relics of performance pieces. Earthworks bore no price tag, but their aura of unsalability generated a demand for documentation. As if to close, at long last, this chapter on art's failure to resist the usual market machinery, Michael Heizer's *Double-Negative,* an earthwork built in 1969–70, recently passed into the possession of the Los Angeles County Musuem of Art.[8]

The marriage of art and money seems blissful these days, when artists like Jeff Koons and Haim Steinbach do well, critically

DEALERS TALK ...

The following statements are excerpted from interviews by Carter Ratcliff:

Leo Castelli



High prices achieved at auctions affect everyone in the art world in many complicated ways. In particular, galleries that handle contemporary works in the secondary market are sometimes rather unhappy. They feel the auction houses have been taking precious materials away from them. Such problems have never affected this gallery. On the contrary, it was favorable to my cause to see works by my artists attaining high prices in auction sales because it suggested to collectors that the prices we charge here are not in any way excessive. Therefore, I have friendly feelings toward the auction houses, though I can understand if, recently, some think the bidding has gone too high. These immense prices *are* a bit disturbing. They show the law of supply and demand operating in an extreme way.

In the '50s, just before I opened my gallery, the Guggenheim Museum purchased Cézanne's *Clockmaker* for $30,000. It seemed a high price at the time. Of course, you must allow for inflation in judging these things. But there has been another inflation, an art-inflation, over the past three decades that has raised prices in actual terms. Only real estate is comparable, though, I must say, sometimes the market is a little bit more like horse racing. The public has begun to look at prices rather than paintings. In the beginning, when my gallery was small, I sold works for $500 to $1,200. Now I'm not astonished when I sell one for $1 million. We all get used to things.

The art world is no longer a quiet place, and this affects the judgment of collectors, too. Especially the younger, more adventurous, more omnivorous ones. They create a strong demand for the work of certain new artists. Prices go up because the supply is relatively small, no matter how productive the artist is. Collectors become extraordinarily competitive. The esthetic aspect falls by the wayside. Not in every case, naturally. There are always the happy few who are not only deeply involved with the esthetic

side of art but are able to purchase precisely what they want, even at today's prices.

For many years it puzzled me that the general public's interest in art didn't seem to be increasing. There were more galleries, museums, art magazines. Much more information about art was being disseminated but the public at large seemed quite indifferent. Now the news about high prices has captured their attention. This has its unfavorable side, of course. Yet some who became interested in a superficial way have gotten truly involved with art. So the trend is positive and it is difficult to see what might reverse it.

October 19th did not affect the art market. Quite the opposite. The crash convinced people that art is one of the better investments. So the ball goes on. New collectors appear. Curators project one big show after another. In New York, we see ambitious new galleries opening all the time. Now that artists like Roy Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns seem to have become old masters, the market stays strong and this stimulates younger artists to put their best foot forward. Besides Neo-Geo, there are already newer developments on the horizon. It's very exciting, a great moment in every respect. I see no reason for things to slow down, barring the outbreak of war. I feel very optimistic. □

Ivan Karp

I can't analyze the reverberations from Oct. 19th. My impression is that there was a ten-day state of shock, and that's all. But I'm not in a position to measure it because we don't deal primarily in blue-chip material. Ours are fresh-faced, beautiful new talents. Of course I can hardly be unaware that there's a general excitement around the visual arts. In comparison with literature or theater or music, they get an incredible amount of attention. It's very surprising to me. Naturally, we're honored that we have the opportunity to participate in this community.

The attention paid to art is amplified by the amount of money that's being shifted around from one place to another. You see it most readily in the recent auctions of contemporary art. We've been much discomfited and troubled and fascinated by the latest round of record prices. I get reactions from weary veterans of the art wars. People come to me and just shrug in amazement. And some of them are gleaning significant profits. We don't play much part in it. We just sit on the sidelines and stare in stark wonderment. It's an hysterical market condition brought about by various factors.

To a degree, it's the entrance of the Japanese into the market—their ignorance of the nature of Western art and their willingness to pay vast sums for things they're not acquainted with. I expect the weakness of the dollar plays a dramatic role in all this. We have the Europeans entering the market as well. In addition, there is the Warhol hysteria, which has no foundation in the vitality of his art or the importance of his achievement. One sees a sort of commodity trading. Works of minor consequence or no consequence at all and, in some cases, outright fakes, are being sold at ridiculous prices. Warhol's influence on this will probably ease off somewhat after his retrospective at MOMA in the fall. Perhaps then the market will become more sober.

Now, some people who deal in what I call used pictures—pictures put up for resale—are very well served by the current hysteria. I don't condemn them for being in the market, as long as they sell worthy goods. When I came to West Broadway in 1969, I was here all alone. Now it's supposed that there are 130, 140 galleries in SoHo and vicinity. I haven't the faintest notion of how they make a living, unless they're selling some controlled substance in the back room. How can they make it? Their rents are six to twelve thousand dollars a month, beside all the other expenses connected with this sort of activity.

A lot of young people come into this who are probably part of a very prosperous family. These are nice-looking people with a certain amount of cultivation who seem to have not the vaguest idea of what goes on. Our prices for a young artist start at three thousand dollars. They start their young artists at ten, twelve, fifteen thousand dollars. There are probably clients fascinated by a glamorous setting who are willing to pay prices like that. I don't think it's a durable condition. It's going to sort itself out.

At Broadway and Prince Street, 25 new galleries have opened up, possibly more. Each is a lovely place. You go in, they don't even talk to you. They don't appear to feel the need. Perhaps they have a secret clientele. Sometimes I make believe I'm an artist with slides, just as an act of confrontation. I ask if they look at artists' work. They don't even glance up from the desk. They're not looking now, not for 30 years. It's bizarre. The amount of curious arrogance and pretension that settles on people who enter this sphere is what's really annoying.

Not everyone agrees on which artists have achieved notoriety for no good reason, but few would deny that there is a highly visible contingent of them on the

continued on page 147

Paula Cooper

Secondary-market dealers don't care about an artist's overall prices. They just want to sell the object they happen to have on hand at the highest possible profit, and sometimes they can convince collectors that this work is a treasure worth who-knows-what amount of money. But the best prices for a living artist are always at the artist's home base—the gallery.

Even when we resell a piece, it is always for much less than a private dealer on the resale market would charge. A gallery has a responsibility to its artists. You have to keep prices reasonable because if they go too high, it hurts the artist's overall market among the gallery's collectors, and of course that primary market is what gives the artist a livelihood. The artist isn't helped if an occasional piece goes for a huge price in the secondary market.

It's really a battle to keep a young artist's prices reasonable. About 30 European dealers may be after him. They're unbelievable pests. He shows with one gallery in Cologne, say—a very good dealer—and we let museum exhibitions take care of the problem of getting his work seen in the rest of Europe. Obviously, museums have the largest, most diverse audience. And that's important because, as a dealer, you're proselytizing for your artists. You want people to know about their art. It needs to be exhibited to everyone, not just reserved for collectors.

I know how important it was to me to go to museums and galleries when I was first learning about art. I would feel deprived if suddenly that weren't available. Art is important and ought to be there, for everyone, like music. Think of the future of art if young artists couldn't see as much art as they need to see. It's absolutely necessary. □

Lawrence Rubin

I feel that art-for-investment is the single most unattractive aspect of this whole business. Certain younger dealers seem to be in sympathy with collecting as investment. We've benefited from this trend at Knoedler, no doubt about it, but I don't like it. What you really wish for is a pipe dream: that everybody who buys a work of art is really devoted to it.

Photos Castelli: Rita K. Katz, Karp: David Horton, Kind: Cosimo Di Leo Ricatto, Blum: Robert E. Mates Gagosian, © 1988 Ivan Dalla Tana Brown: Howard Barash, Helman: Jack Shear, Baxter: Yoshi Ueda, Solomon: William Wegman [detail from Portrait of Holly, 1981]

There are no more good artists now than there were 50 years ago, yet there are many more collectors. The Reagan revolution produced more millionaires than you can shake a stick at. They have to have something to buy. Art gives its owner instant culture, a step up. So certain artists produce for the market. You often see a standard collection filled with signature works of well-known artists. It reflects a smattering of education about contemporary art. This approach is encouraged by the auctions. They're high-profile, the prices are published in the papers. They support that tendency in American life to boast in a very public way.

Nothing resembling today's market appeared until 1968. Prices showed a steep rise for four or five years. Then in 1973 and '74 there was the recession. Since we pulled out of that, prices have gone straight up, like a rocket. Nothing affects them. The October 19th crash hasn't made a dent, or possibly it drew more money into art. But I think the effect is minimal. People collect art with the same kind of money they use to buy thoroughbred horses—marginal money that a stock market crash can't really touch. The comparison isn't as farfetched as it might sound. Both art and horses require an extremely acute eye. □

Lawrence Rubin is director of M. Knoedler & Co.

Phyllis Kind

After the Chicago Art Fair, someone asked me, "Why have dealers at all? Why not just have auctions and art fairs?" A question like that indicates the absolute antithesis of the way I perceive art-dealing, as an opportunity for a collector to come to understand artist X, by watching the development of this person over a number of years. The auction houses have been very aggressive, whooping up some kind of superficial interest that has something to do with the economy and nothing to do with art. And they are aggressively pursuing artists to come up with work to put on the auction market. I've been aggressively pursuing collectors for years, asking them not to put works by living artists up for auction, but to bring them back to where they got them—if they choose to sell those works.

Auctions deal in one-shot commodities. Dealers represent artists who develop, who continue to grow. It becomes more and more offensive that people interested in commodification are buying art commodities made to suit those people whose interests lie in commodification. It's a really unbelievable cycle, I think. Artists have appeared to produce this kind of art, and there's a kind of dealer that has come into being to help the process along, who possibly wouldn't feel the way I do.

I find myself in the company of those who strongly feel that this isn't the best thing for art. The artist will be the one most severely damaged. The motto at auctions

isn't caveat emptor, it's caveat artist. I can't say I believe in divine retribution, but I do feel that the situation will straighten itself out somehow. We are living through a fin-de-siècle. I think the excess, the decadence, of the current scene will overdo itself, heat itself up in its own fumes and disappear.

In the meantime, I don't think real collectors are going to be discouraged because these other people are making fools of themselves. There's a sane market underneath the crazy market, I believe, and it's that assumption on which I base my business. I haven't noticed any serious threats to what I'm doing. Above all, I'm amazed to see that there are still artists who seriously make art, and I don't think there are any fewer than in earlier periods, which is an amazement in itself. There aren't any more, either. How much genius is there in any period? It doesn't increase just because auction prices go crazy. □

Irving Blum

The audience develops exponentially. As more people collect art, there are just that many more opportunities for new people to come into contact with art and be drawn into collecting. It's just mathematics.

People can come at art directly, and just like it on first contact; but, ideally, there should be a preparation. There should be a certain amount of looking, of referring, of study. That happens more and more readily now that there is so much more museum activity everywhere, and so much art being exposed in galleries. Once collectors know what they're about, some very pleasant avenues open up for them. They can, for instance, make their collections available for exhibitions. They can lend, as museums will of course encourage them to do. Lending to a major traveling exhibition has two advantages. It gives one a chance to be generous by sharing one's possessions with the general public. And it feeds one's ego. These two motives come together to produce a life-style that can be very attractive and totally absorbing. A collector becomes part of a network of lively people—artists, curators, writers, other collectors. One constantly receives requests for visits from people interested in one's collection. When a collector travels, he plugs into the art network wherever he goes. He is shown other collections. There are studio visits, appointments with curators. And there is always new work to be seen, to be read about, possibly acquired. It's a fascinating and highly civilized kind of existence. Art can become the reason for living one's life.

The effects of the art boom

This increase in activity has changed the nature of collecting somewhat. There's a greater density, the market is more heavily populated, so the pressure on collectors to decide early on is much more intense. These pressures may well have changed the nature of art, too. There were advantages to the struggles that artists had to go through in earlier times. There are bound to be casualties among the current stars, young artists who shot to the top very quickly. Artists now go into art in the spirit of individuals seeking brilliantly successful careers. In the past, it was success of a kind to be able to eke out some sort of living, however marginal. The spirit animating the young artist has changed amazingly. During the 1960s, prices for the works of the most prominent stars never rocketed upward. By today's standards, pricing was almost flat for everyone, including blue-chip artists. In this decade prices have soared and this may deprive certain artists of their edge. Even if it isn't setting them up for a fall, it quite possibly will be seen to have had a dulling effect.

The significance of auctions

I think the market for art has become so big that it's impossible to generalize about it. A number of years ago, if I were an artist who had the fortune or misfortune to have a picture surface at Sotheby's, and the picture went for less than it really should have, it would have been an occasion of mourning and deep despair. Now it's of no consequence. An auction result is only one measure among many. □

Bess Cutler

After October 19th, well-established art became a better investment than the stock market, provided that collectors concentrate on safer kinds of art. That seems to be happening, which means they are stay-

and commercially, with works that celebrate consumerism at least as enthusiastically as they question it. Avida Dollars is the moment's unsung culture hero, yet blasé attitudes about money obscure a persistent uneasiness. Still half-consciously fearing that a union with commerce besmirches art, we put the blame on art dealers. After all, when art and money marry, dealers are the brokers. Cast in that questionable role, they look resilient and smooth.

Weathering the 1973–74 recession without much trouble, dealers in contemporary art glided to the end of the decade more than ready to cash in on Neo-Expressionism's "return to the figure."[9] Galleries have boomed and multiplied in the 1980s. New York's East Village scene invented itself, sprawled, then contracted as a new art neighborhood appeared at the intersection of Broadway and Prince Street. Partly a SoHo annex, partly an economically upward migration from the East Village, this outpost on Lower Broadway does not yet feel permanent. It does look prosperous. Paradoxically, as the '80s art market flourishes, galleries seem to come in for less blame. Flashier, more aggressive players have begun to assume some of that burden. Sleek with profits, they inspire moralistic fingers to shift direction, like weathervanes. Dealers, too, have begun to point. Their targets are the auction houses.

Auctioneers are charged, first, with inflationary mischief that divorces esthetic merit from any reasonable assessment of market value. In what sense is van Gogh's *Irises* worth the $53.9 million it fetched at Sotheby's last November 11th? Why not $5.39 or $539 million? The circus atmosphere of an auction encourages decimal points to leap about like wayward acrobats. Records are set, but not for all artists, all styles, all periods. Hence the indictment's second count: auctions narrow the art world's focus to the sort of object that goes well off the block. Much art is ignored, while a few varieties begin to glitter like financial instruments of a new kind—bearer bonds made of oil on canvas or sculpted metal. This is the weightiest charge: more effectively than gallery sales, bidding scrimmages on the auction floors don't simply taint art with a commercial flavor; they turn paintings and sculpture into a kind of money.

When the bidding sets a record, the event is news, and in any case auction houses must make their prices public. Though dealers are now required to post the prices of works on view [see pp. 86–87], that is all—absolutely all—the monetary information they must or will provide. They will disclose no details about discounts to favored clients, the number of exhibited works actually sold, or the nature and extent of their back-room business in unexhibited works. In contrast to auction houses, the galleries form an unexamined and largely unregulated market. This permits discretion, a valuable commodity in itself. As Andre Emmerich puts it: "Galleries offer clients the opportunity to collect art in the absence of publicity." Though the nature of the case thwarts proof, it seems sensible to assume that certain collectors reap measurable benefits from this pecuniary hush. Buyers may also gain a less tangible advantage from the ambiance that accompanies financial tact: with no auctioneer's hammer threatening, a client can consult with the dealer, get to know a work of art, make an informed choice. A personal relationship with the dealer and his staff may develop, and this can lead to friendships with artists, with other collectors and with curators avid to borrow the works one has acquired. From the stillness of the dealer's viewing room, a way of life elaborates itself.

I have of course presented an idealized view of the advantages of buying from a gallery, but it would be too cynical to suppose that the ideal is wildly at variance with the facts. Many collectors report themselves pleased with buying from dealers, a satisfaction they owe in part to the friendships fostered by the privacy that galleries are so careful to preserve. When a dealer in the secondary market emerges as a collector, as they often do in the '80s, friendship between entrepreneur and client is strengthened by a cluster of converging interests.

The most transcendentally esthetic behavior or image reveals motives in some sense economic. The esthetic is an aspect of the economic, as the economic is an aspect of the esthetic.

Friendship aside, much of the art world seems united in distaste for the high-glitz commercialism of the auction houses. If art is to redeem money, shouldn't that redemption confer, at the least, a measure of genteel elegance? Some collectors revel in the journalistic clatter set off by record prices. Others prefer their consumption to be less conspicuous. They appreciate the power of a gallery's social ambiance to take the sharp commercial edge off the marriage of art and money. The finesse of the New York galleries sometimes permits buyers to believe, almost, that art-dealing is not a business like any other. Commercial realities fade or, if they insist on remaining visible, are cast into a flattering light.

Adam Smith argued that in seeking profits, a merchant is "led by an invisible hand to promote an end that was no part of his intention. . . . pursuing his own interests he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it."[10] Good businessmen unconsciously do good for the community, said Smith. The "invisible hand" is not market manipulation, as some commentators have thought. A benevolent force beyond any merchant's influence, Smith's "invisible hand" is a secular version of divine Providence. Guiding ordinary business people to provide social benefits above and beyond personal profit, this agent of a capitalist divinity settles matters so that a by-product of art-dealing is a transcendent *cultural* good. Or so dealers subtly encourage us to believe. No dealer claims outright that Providence has extended to the art market an "invisible hand" more refined and sophisticated than the one that guides ordinary markets. But all the dealers I interviewed make the claim implicitly with the observation that, by its very nature, the gallery business performs public services of an elevated sort, and their yearly rounds of free public exhibitions, some of museum caliber, give this claim a degree of plausibility.

To hear some dealers tell it, no "invisible hand," crude or sophisticated, shapes the auction market. Once the bidding starts, there is only raw acquisitiveness, a Hobbesian state of war that pits each against each and God—or the auctioneer—against all. No higher good emerges, just the spectacle of art works converted directly into lucre. Pushed to extremes, this argument would conclude that there are two art markets, one beneficial, the other not. Of all the dealers I interviewed, only Phyllis Kind came close to saying this. The others confined themselves to expressing reservations, mild or vigorous, about the auction houses' effects on the market and on art itself. Few dealers claim to inhabit an art market separate from the auction market, yet they all imply, more or less straightforwardly, that they operate in a shared market in a calmer, more constructive way. The dealers claim in effect that when they arrange marriages between art and money, the outcome is more favorable to esthetic value that it is at auction.

The auction houses naturally do not accept this view. Martha Baer, the director of Christie's 20th-century fine arts department, says, "Many collectors make purchases both from dealers and at auction. There's a great deal of overlap in the two sets of clientele.

DEALERS TALK ...

ing away from more speculative things. Many collectors have gone into the secondary market to find works they need to fill gaps in their collections. They would rather spend $30,000 on that kind of purchase than $10,000 on the work of a new artist. This has been a depressant on my kind of gallery, which shows younger people in the early stages of their careers.

You can't look at an art gallery as a pur-

ist enterprise, like a museum, though our functions do extend to educating our audience about the artists we represent. A gallery is founded on relationships not only with artists but also with critics and curators and of course collectors. I've been hearing from collectors that they're bored this season. Some of my artists have achieved substantial prices and are doing very well, but, in general, there is a lack of interest. With attention focused on a small group of young artists, the galleries are all fighting to show them, and no new trend has appeared to spark the collectors' interest. No strong word of mouth is bringing buyers into the galleries.

One problem is that young European artists are reluctant to show in New York now. They feel too vulnerable to commercialization. Their fear is that they'll show here, get a certain amount of success, and then be shot down. They would prefer to establish themselves in Europe first, and not come to New York until they have more authority. I'm also beginning to hear that some of the younger American artists are staying underground. They don't like the gallery system and its values, and they don't want to participate.

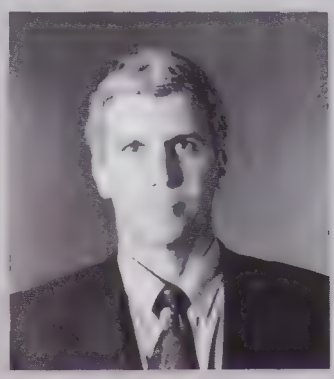
So nothing new has appeared this season and there doesn't seem to be a new trend developing for next fall. This creates a difficult situation for the younger dealers. Certain galleries that started in the East Village are now in SoHo and paying $20,000 to $30,000 a month overhead. Lots of them will fail, and the rest will have to go into the secondary market to survive. I think next year is going to be a mini-depression for the newer galleries. When you talk to the trucking companies, they tell you that they're taking works of art from gallery to gallery not from galleries to collectors. Sometimes I think the infrastructure is functioning, and that's about all. □

Larry Gagosian

Auction prices fluctuate because quality still matters a lot. Recently two Franz Klines came up for auction. One was good, a respectable Kline, and the other major. The prices reflected that, so you can't just say that Kline is worth so much per square inch. In that sense, paintings are not commodities like gold, for example. Art is a commodity but of a funny kind. It is held by relatively few people, and there is not as much liquidity there as some of the recent financial reporting on the art market might suggest. People don't wake up in the morning and decide to buy or sell a van Gogh. Art is more beautiful than gold. It has a spiritual quality. People who buy art like art. I know of no collector who has absolutely no feeling for what he's buying.

There are a lot of new buyers. Even the Japanese are getting interested in contemporary American art, though most of them like pretty French pictures better—Impressionists, van Gogh. The market is still mostly American and it's strong because there is a real hunger for good works. That puts pressure on prices, especially at auction. It creates a volatile situation which doesn't necessarily affect the galleries. So dealers can't just read auction results in the *New York Times* and jack up prices. Sometimes they have to worry about prices declining. If a young or mid-career artist sells for a fantastic amount on the block, paintings by that artist begin to surface in the market. Often there are too many, the market can't absorb them all, and you might see a backsliding.

Auction results are a factor in pricing, but more important is the word-of-mouth among collectors. Initial interest is sparked by a new artist, word spreads, there is a critical response, then gallery exhibitions, and possibly museum shows. Reviews in the *New York Times* can be very important. Some people treat the *Times* like a dope sheet. But serious collectors take a wider range of factors into account. A consensus develops around an artist. Some collectors are especially important in forming this consensus.



They have buzz names, like certain prominent dealers in the primary market. As a secondary market dealer, I also function as a collector. I acquire works for myself. This gives me a credibility I wouldn't have if I were just buying and selling and gave people the idea that I was just another buccaneer. Other dealers in this market work the same way. In the eight years I've been in the art world, the dealer has emerged as an elite collector.

After October 19th, the art market seemed to get stronger. This might be coincidental, but the crash may have made the financial implications of art more pointed. Art became one of the balls being juggled. There's a higher level of commitment to art. It is becoming a larger part of the portfolio. Prices firmed up. In the secondary market, you can take more chances now with riskier work.

Some dealers feel victimized because they don't have access to the kind of publicity that the auctions get for their results, especially their record prices. Private sales often exceed auction prices, and some dealers would like to get some publicity value from that. But a gallery is supposed to offer discretion. For a dealer to talk about sales is vulgar and not good business. □

Diane Brown

After October 19th, there was an immediate withdrawing of our clients. Then they returned, fairly quickly, because there are many signs that art is a good investment. Especially high prices at the auctions, which suggest that art is a solid place to put your money—good for several reasons. Purchasing art is an investment in your soul. I think that makes my artists a better investment than the stock market.

Since I deal primarily in very young artists, the secondary market is not a big factor at my gallery. There hasn't been time for resale to develop. On the other hand, this is a four-year-old gallery, and it is sometimes difficult to stay alive. Back-room sales help, and they have been getting easier recently, if you can find the material. That is not always so easy.

High auction prices raise prices in the secondary market, and that is significant, but I'm not in the art business just to buy and sell. I'm a hopeless idealist. I believe that the function of a gallery is educational, and if 99 percent of the people you educate are not collectors, that's OK. Art is the soul of a society, and I don't think there is anything more important than trying to further it. Of course, my gallery is not a museum. Art-dealing is a business, increasingly so. The bureaucracy of New York City treats it as a business. So does my accountant and the I.R.S.

Only my collectors think that perhaps I should be a bit less businesslike sometimes. That is understandable. When I state it as a policy that no work leaves the gallery without being paid for, I'm simply trying

to insure the gallery's survival. Naturally some collectors will point out that it wasn't always done that way.

When I came to New York, I had been dealing in art in Washington, D.C., for seven years. I thought that, right away, I would be taken seriously. When I told that to Irving Blum, he roared with laughter. He told me I was at square one. New York makes you start all over again. That's when I began to realize that a dealer is like an artist in certain ways. I have an ego. I want to be able to show people how I see contemporary art. In the last season or so, the gallery has become coherent, more representative of what I want to do. So I've been feeling more and more enthusiastic every year. □

Joe Helman

Art is like baseball. You can look at it any way you want. If you want to look at art through the market, that's just one way among many others. You could just as easily look at the explosion of the audience for art or the increase in the number of art schleppers or frame-makers. Take a census of galleries or artists' lofts or artists' bars. It's all there and it's all part of the same game.

It's a bigger game than it used to be because the art world has gotten better at proselytizing. We're able to move art in a way we couldn't 20 years ago. There's always the suspicion that in an expanding market, the art work becomes a commodity like any other—that people buy for investment, not for the experience of owning and living with a work of art. But the truth, in my experience, is that buying is always driven by an esthetic response. A collector may think it's not, but it always is. If the guy who commissions art has great taste, a great eye for visual harmonies, and he understands the pictorial tradition, he's going to select great art—provided it's available to him. But he does it from the point of view of someone with a religious mission. By the same token, a contemporary investor thinks about the future value of what he buys, but his idea of a good investment is good art. So you show him great things.

For most of our history, Europe defined what was important and America followed along. But that changed when European collectors began to buy Pop art. Suddenly they wanted to acquire our traditions, not

In fact, galleries will often make purchases at auction for clients, and would be remiss if they didn't, assuming that an appropriate piece had appeared on the block. Dealers are very active participants in the auction market." To the charge that galleries provide personal attention that auction houses to not, Baer says, simply, "It's nonsense. We talk to clients all the time." Furthermore, the major houses present lectures and offer art appreciation courses.

Lucy Mitchell-Inness, vice-president of Sotheby's contemporary department, acknowledges that vigorous bidding creates certain problems for galleries. When unnamed Japanese corporations and other mega-bidders enter the fray, prices can quickly climb beyond a dealer's reach—or at least beyond what they expected to pay. Moreover, dealers who can afford to buy at auction find that certain clients shy away from paintings recently knocked down at heavily reported prices. Other clients have no such qualms, and, in general, says Mitchell-Inness, "There is a wide group of collectors who buy at auction and from dealers. Naturally some make all their purchases from galleries, but another group only participates in auctions. We make it easy for busy people to acquire art. They study our catalogues, attend the twice-yearly sales, and build a collection that way. It isn't necessary for them to go running around in the rain or enter into discussions about price with a seller. There are no negotiations in the salesrooms. Some people simply enjoy the sport of bidding at auction."

Only the most indignant dealers would disagree with Baer that "there's room enough for everyone—and not only enough room. Also interdependence. Galleries often consign works to auction houses, and of course the contemporary pieces we sell usually came onto the market originally in gallery exhibitions" [before passing through their consignors' hands]. Yet, as dealers often told me, "The art market revolves around resale." Auctions have been indispensible to this resale—or secondary—market in contemporary art at least since Sotheby's sold off the Scull collection in 1973. For nearly two decades, the auction houses and the galleries have worked the same market on shared economic terms. If dealers wish to set themselves apart from the turmoil of the auctions, they must stress differences of style and method. Galleries are orderly places where advance schedules are determined in detail. Auction houses must take what turns up on consignment or whatever they, as art-stalkers, can drive from cover. So even as they boost the market in contemporary art, the auction houses must follow paths blazed by the galleries—or by some of them.

All high-powered dealers and many still gathering their strength are guided by some more or less articulate notion of what the history of art has been and ought to be, and these notions generate trends. The works on view at the auction houses' presale exhibitions of contemporary art can reflect current developments in only the roughest, fun-house way. Because of that roughness, because the auction houses can follow the contemporary market but not lead, and because they've made such a financial success of this tagging-after, some dealers accuse the auction houses of opportunism. These polemics are effective in shifting the money taint from dealing to auctioneering, yet it seems clear to me that, despite their wish to accomplish an elevated sort of good for the culture, galleries are as commercial as any other business.

If this is so, then the galleries might as well shelve their attempts to convince the art world that they are better than auctions at redeeming money—at elevating lucre to some transcendent plane. If galleries are no more nor less commercial than auction houses or business firms in general, then art is a commodity like any other and we will no longer have to go through the motions of shock or enlightenment when artists like Steinbach and Koons present works that reveal (yet again) the commodity status of art.

Still half-consciously and uneasily fearing that a union with commerce besmirches art, we put the blame on art dealers. After all, when art and money marry, dealers are the brokers.

Above all, we will no longer have to feel qualms about the marriage of art and money. We will no longer have to wonder if it is possible to separate the esthetic value of an art work from its commercial value. For, as nonchalant about art and money as we have become, we still try to make that separation. We still assume that a price tag is one thing and a critical evaluation is another thing entirely. They are not, though it might be helpful to say at the outset that I am not going to argue that esthetic value is merely a function of market value, or that a critical judgment is a commercial judgment in disguise. My argument is expansive, not reductive.

I believe that our persistent habit of trying to separate market value from esthetic value is misguided, like the struggle to extricate a picture's content from its form—an impossible feat, and not because form and content are so intimately intertwined that we can't disentangle them. They are simply not separate things: "form" and "content" are the names of aspects—facets, if you like—of a single thing. As our interests shift, we focus on one aspect or another. Sometimes the criticism properly called formalist focuses on shape and color exclusively enough to convince us that the aspect of art we call content is somehow extraneous—added on—to an essence called form. But it is not. Content, no less than what we call form, is integral to every art work. The space in Claude's paintings makes no formal sense unless we acknowledge that he painted landscapes. The space in Mondrian's paintings makes no formal sense unless we acknowledge that an aspect of its form is its content of De Stijl polemics, and, moreover, that those polemics did not banish from Mondrian's art all vestiges of Claudian landscape. Likewise, Western art since the Renaissance makes no esthetic sense unless we recognize that what we call "esthetic" is only one aspect of art works whose other aspects include those called "entrepreneurial" or even "commercial." At its most "esthetic," art as we know it is always "selling" something—or many things, its own vision of the world first.

Somewhere near the top of the list of an art work's offerings is its physical presence. Even the Conceptualist's scrap of onionskin paper wants to get bought, in the narrow sense, by a collector. But just as there is no conflict between form and content, there is none between an art work's wish to make itself attractive, a must-have item, in the eyes of collectors and its attempt to persuade a general audience to accept its larger meanings. The two appeals are more than compatible, they are identical—different aspects of the same invitation to understand, to accept, to buy the work and its meanings, figuratively and literally. Some art looks so obscure or outrageous that it seems designed to repel collectors even as it makes a bid for critical notice. Think of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings when they were new or Leon Golub's horrific tableaux. If critics do take note of "difficult" work—if, in other words, there is an exchange between writer and artist on the level of analysis—a marketplace exchange often follows.

Western art gains its entrepreneurial flavor from the Western self. We define ourselves in competition for economic profits that, thoroughly examined, reveal other aspects—social, cultural, esthetic.[11] Likewise, the most transcendentally esthetic behavior or image reveals motives in some sense economic. The esthetic is an aspect of the economic, as the economic is an aspect of the esthetic. So to carry on—as some still do, in however desultory a way—the project of isolating the market value of an art work in the hope of excluding that supposedly crass, vulgar consideration from the realm of the esthetic is as misconceived a procedure as the formalist protocol that tries to banish content from the realm of form. We often say things like, "X is a good artist even though nothing was bought at the last show"; or, more to the point, "Y is brilliant, *even though* her works are fetching absurdly high sums." I'm suggesting that such remarks, not to mention our allegorical images of the marriage of art and money, rest on a nonexistent distinction.

But what, you might ask, about the $53.9 million paid for van Gogh's *Irises*? Surely here is an instance of economic value added to a painting with no, or little, bearing on its esthetic worth. Time and again I hear it said that van Gogh is great but prices like that are absurd. I agree with this chorus of protest but not wholeheartedly. *Irises* fetched a nonsensically high price, but it doesn't mean van Gogh was any less entrepreneurial than other Western individuals, or that his art was not intent, in its way, on selling itself, figuratively and literally. [For more on van Gogh and the market, see Carol Zemel's article in this issue, p. 88.] Even William Blake wanted to make sales, as his many prospectuses make obsessively clear. In 1793 he published an announcement of a series of etchings with this note: "The Labours of the Artist, the Poet, the Musician, have been proverbially attended by poverty and obscurity . . . owing to a neglect of means to propagate such works as have wholly absorbed the Man of Genius." But now, Blake continues, he has discovered a printing process that makes his illuminated poetry available cheaply; he is, he announces, "sure of his reward." But 15 years later, his reward had not come, and he rails against "the Oppression of [Sir] Joshua [Reynolds] & his Gang of Cunning Hired Knaves."[12] Blake saw in himself a modern individual, and in Reynolds a representative of a guild authority on a medieval model, the Royal Academy, whose chief purpose was to drag art and individuals backward.[13] As Adam Smith objected to the constraining effects of old-fashioned mercantilism, so Blake argued that the Royal Academy was outmoded the moment it appeared.

It may seem odd to pair the sober Adam Smith with the visionary Blake, but if we can get over the habit of seeing the commercial and the esthetic as separate orders of value, it will become clear that Blake and Smith shared the modern entrepreneur's faith that, with providential certainty, free markets generate the best outcome for all. There is an image of Blake as an archetype of the Romantic individual who defined personal freedom as a value independent of marketplace demands. If we set aside this long-standing image, we will see that Blake did the opposite of what is routinely supposed; that is, he defined freedom not in defiance of commerce, but rather in marketplace terms that, when looked at from another angle, become the terms of untrammeled Romantic self-expression.

Artists like Blake and van Gogh—I mean visionaries of the kind we too readily see as untainted by money or the thought of it—feel a particularly urgent need to win in the marketplace, to have their visions accepted in as many ways as possible, by purchasers, viewers, critics, historians, everyone. That is because they, more than others, feel marginal and unaccepted. Of course it is the nature of modern institutions to make us all feel that way to some extent. The forms of feudalism, by contrast, molded themselves to the human material at their disposal in a way that the forms of modern factories and bureaucracies do not—or so we have believed ever since Horace Walpole began to play games with the Gothic at

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the other way around. That's what happens when you win a war. You get to impose your culture on the other guy. This created a previously unimaginable market for American art. But it was nothing like today's market. When an artist surfaced in the 1960s and received a high level of attention, prices would stay even during a ten-year period. Frank Stella, Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly—their prices were virtually consistent during the '60s. I cite these people because they had a critical record. They were very much written about. That stability isn't possible now.

The present market responds to the rules that govern all commodities—rules of supply and demand. Dealing in art was of course always a business, but it was such a thin business for so long that it wasn't really responsive to economic pressures. Now that it is much more broadly based, it's

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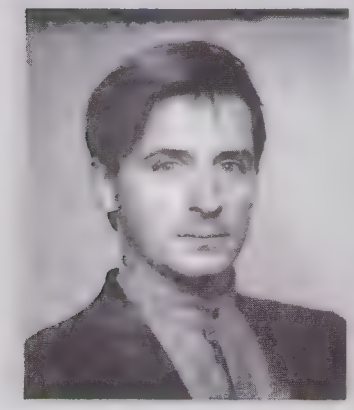
Douglas Baxter

That *Forbes* article ["Greed is not just for profit," by Susan Lee, April 18, '88] about the auction market seemed to imply that galleries were somehow out to cheat their clients, whereas the auctions are aboveboard, totally public with their prices, and so on. But galleries don't want to cheat anybody. They want clients to come back. The article had a Reaganite, pure market view of art—paintings as commodities like any other. But a work of art is not just a commodity, pure and simple, though it might seem that way at an auction when the bidding goes wild. If, at a certain split



second, two people want a certain painting, the price escalates. You have, overall, at an auction, about a minute to make up your mind, and not every worthwhile piece gets the attention it should in a situation like that. Lots of good art works aren't good auction material. If a painting is too big, too dark, atypical—if it's not a textbook example of a particular artist—it might be overlooked. In a gallery, a collector may be giv-

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Holly Solomon

It's Stardom, USA, which makes art into a commodity. I've been astonished to see that the banks are now willing to accept works of art as collateral for loans, which puts a painting by a recognized artist in the same category as jewelry or real estate. When I began collecting the Pop artists in the 1960s that was unimaginable.

Of course it's dangerous for art to become a commodity. People start thinking of it as an investment and suddenly you find that the art world is filled with a lot of safe

ideas. Because people want their investments to be safe. There's a corporate-art attitude out there, and that fosters the idea of a nice, predictable mainstream. My gallery does not go in that direction. I feel it is still possible to be avant-garde, to show leadership. We offer an alternative. I often feel rather isolated, even slightly weird at times, but things have been going well for my artists. And the future bodes well.

I place my faith in my history book. The artist who has powerful art-ideas, who changes the way we think about art, is the one who will last. But it is possible to be very hot on the current hit parade and then fizzle. Prices go up and then collapse, or prices go up at auction and possibly stay there longer than anyone expected. Certain contemporary works are traded on the phone, without anyone actually seeing what they're buying. They buy a name and a date—artist such-and-such in his such-and-such period. It affects everyone.

Recently I saw some interesting work by a young artist in a very good gallery, and I asked to see the price list. Surprisingly, the prices were low and I began to wonder if the gallery could really be committed to this artist if the price tag was so reasonable. I had thought that I was beyond thinking of art that way! I like to believe that I don't judge art according to its price tag, and I don't, but I have to admit that this money-charged atmosphere is impossible to escape. And I have to admit that money is a good thing. It creates a powerful kind of energy which makes many important things possible. High prices are good. Also, as I said, they're dangerous. But my belief in history is very strong. Time is on the side of good art and on my side, too, because of course I believe my side is just. Any dealer who is serious about art believes that. □

Richard Flood

Out-of-town artists always think there's a schematic, an art-world Lego set. Put it together the right way and you're a star. That sudden burst of East Village celebrity-artists—and dealers—made it seem true for a moment. But most of the young artists who got into that system were just so much fodder. When you're getting shows everywhere, getting reviewed in New York, out of town, in Europe, and you're still so young, it's like Scarlett O'Hara. You don't develop. Some East Village group show may still be touring, for all I know. Most of the artists are forgotten.

It came to an end when rents began to go up. Real estate is always more powerful than art. And the East Village dealers who disappeared, as most of them have, were especially vulnerable. The art market revolves around resale. A dealer can't just represent a stable. Many of the East Village dealers never understood that. They lacked inventory, and even if they considered the need for it, they had nowhere to store in those minuscule East Village spaces.

They were naive about marketing. If a first show was hot, they'd double the prices for the second show. Artists shouldn't be priced out of the market quite that fast. So the scene contracted almost as fast as it expanded. It was a wonderful moment, in the beginning. A new bohemia. It was good theater. But convulsively positive activity can lead to convulsively destructive activity. Dragon's teeth were sown far and wide in the East Village, but no army sprang up. It was heartbreaking.

Of course, for two or three years, new galleries have been opening up in the buildings on lower Broadway as the East Village's demise set in. But this new scene has a different atmosphere—more sober, more like an extension of SoHo. You see an echo of East Village theater in the SoHo group shows of the last few seasons—different curators but the same names on the wall. The strategy is to dip into the pool of salable young artists, ones with track records, and present a batch of them with a premise, some twist on a fashionable esthetic. This guarantees sales but it's just treading water. □

Richard Flood is director of the Barbara Gladstone Gallery.

Pricing New York Galleries

The new compulsory price lists in New York galleries provide provocative glimpses into the mysteries of a billion-dollar business.

BY DWIGHT V. GAST

I was as surprised as anyone when New York City's so-called Truth-in-Pricing law requiring that "all consumer commodities, except food, exposed for sale or offered for sale at retail shall have conspicuously displayed, at the point of exposure or offering for sale, the total selling price," began to be enforced last March in the city's art galleries. Curious to see how dealers were handling the situation, in early May I conducted an informal survey at a number of galleries I normally frequent around town. Coincidentally, contemporary art auctions were being held at the time in New York, followed by the Chicago International Art Exposition, which further heightened my general awareness of prices in the art world. The events also briefly took some gallery owners away from their places of business, so I was left wondering how much of the courteous treatment I am happy to report to have received at most galleries was due to the "cat's away" factor.

My methodology involved simply looking at the price list, which I found prominently displayed at the front desk, either in a clear plastic sheet or a black binder. When I didn't see the list I asked for it, and gallery assistants willingly and often cheerfully produced it from behind the counter. Some galleries even matter-of-factly included it with the artists' biographies and reviews customarily on display in binders at the desk. I then openly wrote down the prices on the exhibition announcements, unless the announcements were not available, in which case I recorded the figures in a small notebook. One exception was the Holly Solomon Gallery, whose announcement *was* available, but I was asked to pay two dollars for it. (Was this a new subsidiary industry, I wondered? Why wasn't *its* price conspicuously displayed?) I used my notebook. On no occasion did anyone ask me why I was making notes of the prices.

Ranking the Price Lists

The Andre Emmerich Gallery's list won my prize for most elegant (not to say confident) display, mounted in a sturdy metal frame above the front desk (the O.K. Harris list, in a white frame in the corridor, took second place, and Arnold Herstand's lists in tough acrylic frames came in third). John Gibson's and Sperone Westwater's tied as the jauntiest, each dangling nonchalantly from pushpins above the desk. Marlborough's was most menacing, literally kept chained to the desk in a heavy black binder. (Sidney Janis's list was attached to the desk with a cord; Robert Miller's, glued stiffly to a black paper folder, got points for subtlety; and Laurie Rubin's, taped to the desk and kept out of arm's reach and myopics' sight by an intruding glass door, was annoyingly inaccessible.) Hirschl & Adler Modern departed from the new tradition of black-or-clear-plastic displays by boldly placing their list in gray leatherette. And I think New York City's Department of Consumer Affairs should give a special compliance award to the Luhring, Augustine & Hodes Gallery, which actually used the word "retail" on its price list.

On some galleries' lists, unavailable works of art were so denoted with the unequivocal "sold" or "private collection," the letters "NFS" meaning "not for sale" for whatever reason, the term "reserved" (auction-house parlance rather puzzling in the context of the Truth-in-Pricing law), or the long-standing practice of attaching red dots to indicate the works had been sold. In a few instances, the prices of sold works were obliterated.

At other galleries I saw no list. I assume the absence of one at 49th Parallel, the self-described "centre for contemporary Canadian art," must be due to some sort of diplomatic immunity, but the Barbara Gladstone, BlumHelman, and Max Protetch galleries would not provide me with them, though assistants quoted the prices of individual works. At the Ronald Feldman Gallery, when I asked for the list I was told to wait for a "salesman," a young man who came out bearing a typed sheet of titles with prices written beside them by hand.

A gentleman at the front desk of the Mary Boone Gallery, however, completely refused my request to look at a price list, telling me brusquely, "All the works are sold. There's a list of the titles of the paintings in the next room, but that's all we have." Somewhat taken aback, I left the gallery. By the following day, however, I had worked up enough courage to return. I headed straight for the title list, suspended from a wall between the second room and the gallery's offices as though between Scylla and Charybdis, above the velvet rope that separates the two zones. "What were the prices of these paintings?" I bravely asked a young woman behind the beautifully forbidding barrier. "They're all sold," she snapped. "That's what the red dots mean." (Oh, the shame of it!) Only after some prodding did she say that each work had gone for "one twenty-five," leaving it up to me to add the three extra zeros. Though cents were left off most price lists, this was the only case in which the gallery didn't bother with thousand-dollar amounts.

Financial Forecasts

Undaunted, I then thought that, given the new availability of prices, it might actually be possible to come up with a reasonable annual sales figure for the individual galleries by multiplying the value of the shows I saw by ten (the average number of shows each gallery mounts in a year). Perhaps I could make even more sweeping predictions from that. I talked to dealers about my theory, and their reactions were as diverse as the ways they displayed their price lists. "Completely unreasonable," is how Jason McCoy, of the Jason McCoy Gallery, pronounced my efforts. "You're making the assumption that what you see is what you get. To go by the retail value of the art on the walls is sheer fantasy. There are so many *major* variables."

William Chambers, of the Grace Borgenicht Gallery, was more specific. "In order to get an accurate sales figure, you'd have to come to the show on the last day and look at the price list to see how much of the work sold," he said. "Also, very few galleries will only have what is on the wall in the exhibition. There is always some inventory of other works by the same artist, and works by other artists the galleries represent. That's an entire aspect of the business you won't be able to monitor, and more or less everybody thinks it's their own business."

Just how considerable that aspect is was hinted at by more than one dealer. Betty Cunningham, of Hirschl & Adler Modern, said, "Now that the prices have to be posted, no fool would put his best stuff on the walls. And not everything is going to sell for the amount that is listed, either. Sometimes prices are negotiated down, sometimes they go up—like apartments. So they're not really reflective."

Curt Marcus, of the Curt Marcus Gallery, agreed that there was much more to it than met the eye. "Of course dealers will not talk about their salaries, or much less their legitimate volume of sales. They're always going to say business is either 'great' or 'good.' "

George Adams, of the Frumkin/Adams Gallery, perhaps best summed up the variety of responses I received. "My guess is that every gallery is different," he said. "Your figures could be relatively reasonable, or there could be five times as much in sales if there's an extensive back-room stock. That's why the price list thing is such a joke. It's so inaccurate. It's primarily generating interest because galleries have a reputation for being snotty. And some are well-deserved."

Mary Boone did not return my telephone calls.

Nevertheless, some dealers felt that my financial forecasting might be more or less on the mark, such as Magda Sawon, of Postmasters. "I think it's a fair estimate," she said. "Like me, many galleries mount different kinds of shows in the same season, but all things considered, I guess it's as good a figure as any."

Total Volume

If my observations were at all representative, I presumed it would be possible to extrapolate an annual sales figure for primary market contemporary art dealers in New York. With apologies to Adam Smith, I made my calculations assuming that privately conducted sales compensate about evenly for listed works of art that go unsold, and that there are about 200 galleries to take into consideration.

The total volume of business, then, could be put theoretically at approximately $850 million, more than the gross domestic product of Liberia and less than 16 van Goghs. Regardless of the Truth-in-Pricing law, however, I'll never know whether or not there is any truth in that amount, judging from the response of most dealers. But I must say I enjoyed my foray into consumer reporting, and casting my critical eye into the crystal ball of financial forecasting.

Author: *Art and travel writer Dwight V. Gast usually spends more time looking at art than at price lists.*

Here are the results of my foray into consumer reporting:

BROOKE ALEXANDER
Yvonne Jacquette paintings
$150,000 most expensive
$60,000 least expensive

MASSIMO AUDIELLO
Christian Eckhart sculptures
$20,000 most expensive
$16,000 least expensive

JOSH BAER
Oliver Wasow photographs
$1,500 most expensive
$750 least expensive

VREJ BAGHOOMIAN
Jean-Michel Basquiat paintings
$35,000 most expensive
assistant didn't know least expensive

BLUMHELMAN
John Duff sculptures
$40,000 most expensive
$30,000 least expensive

BLUMHELMAN WAREHOUSE
Xavier Corbero sculptures
$100,000 most expensive
$40,000 least expensive

MARY BOONE
Brice Marden paintings
$125,000 for all works
Eric Fischl paintings
$150,000 most expensive
$70,000 least expensive

GRACE BORGENICHT
Gabor Peterdi paintings
$16,000 most expensive
$5,000 least expensive
Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe paintings
$4,800 most expensive
$3,500 least expensive

HAL BROMM
Russell Sharon sculptures
$6,500 most expensive
$750 least expensive

DIANE BROWN
Joel Fisher sculptures
$40,000 most expensive
$24,000 least expensive

CHRISTINE BURGIN
Fariba Hajamadi paintings
$12,000 most expensive
$2,000 least expensive

FARIDEH CADOT
Juan Uslé paintings
$15,000 most expensive
$2,500 least expensive

LEO CASTELLI
Robert Therrien paintings and sculptures
$65,000 most expensive sculpture
$18,000 most expensive painting
$6,000 least expensive painting
James Rosenquist paintings
$1,000,000 most expensive
$85,000 least expensive

CDS
Jacobo Borges paintings
$50,000 most expensive
$5,000 least expensive

CHARLES COWLES
Howard Ben Tre sculptures
$40,000 most expensive
$12,000 least expensive

RONALD FELDMAN
Ilya Kabakov paintings and installations
$35,000 most expensive painting
$20,000 least expensive painting
$50,000 most expensive room
$10,000 least expensive room

FISCHBACH
Peter Loftus paintings
$11,000 most expensive
$8,000 least expensive
Ann Arnold sculptures
$20,000 most expensive
$6,000 least expensive

FRUMKIN/ADAMS
Luis Cruz Azaceta paintings
$35,000 most expensive
$8,000 least expensive

JOHN GIBSON
John Armleder sculptures
$45,000 most expensive
$7,500 least expensive

GIMPEL & WEITZENHOFFER
Paul Jenkins paintings and collages
$32,000 most expensive
$8,000 least expensive

BARBARA GLADSTONE
Meg Webster sculptures
$30,000 most expensive
$15,000 least expensive

GRACIE MANSION
Hope Sandrow photographs
$8,000 most expensive
$1,200 least expensive

GRAHAM MODERN
Joan Thorne paintings
$40,000 most expensive
$5,000 least expensive

GRUENEBAUM
David Hare paintings and sculptures
$22,000 most expensive
$8,000 least expensive

SCOTT HANSON
Joanna Pousette-Dart paintings
$25,000 most expensive
$6,000 least expensive

O.K. HARRIS
Ralph Goings paintings: $175,000 –$75,000
Jack Mendenhall paintings: $34,000–$18,000
Robert Kogge drawings: all $950
Mariano Del Rosario paintings: $5,600–$3,600

PAT HEARN
Mary Heilman paintings
$14,000 most expensive
$9,000 least expensive

ARNOLD HERSTAND & CO.
Isamu Noguchi sculptures
$300,000 most expensive
$50,000 least expensive

HIRSCHL & ADLER MODERN
Forrest Bess paintings
$8,000 for only work still available

NANCY HOFFMAN
Jim Sullivan paintings
$6,000 most expensive
$1,500 least expensive

SIDNEY JANIS
George Segal sculptures
$500,000 most expensive
$75,000 least expensive

PHYLLIS KIND
Zush paintings
$25,000 most expensive (canvas)
$1,600 least expensive (paper)

M. KNOEDLER & CO.
Robert Motherwell paintings
$300,000 most expensive
$65,000 least expensive

KOURY-WINGATE
General Idea paintings
$12,000 most expensive
$3,000 least expensive

LUHRING, AUGUSTINE & HODES
Stephen Prina paintings and sculptures
$2,750 most expensive (diskettes)
$2,500 least expensive (paintings)

CURT MARCUS
Not Vital sculptures and works on paper
$30,000 most expensive
$8,000 least expensive

JASON MCCOY
Jane Kaplowitz paintings
$10,000 most expensive
$6,000 least expensive

METRO PICTURES
Jennifer Bolande sculptures
$4,000 most expensive
$600 least expensive

ROBERT MILLER
Andy Warhol drawings
$32,000 most expensive
$14,000 least expensive

MOKOTOFF
Paul Thek paintings: $8,000–$2,400
Lea Nikel sculptures: $4,000 -$2,200

DANIEL NEWBURG
Taro Suzuki sculptures
$5,500 most expensive
$1,500 least expensive

POSTMASTERS
Aimee Rankin sculptures
$6,000 all works

P.P.O.W.
Lynne Cohen photographs
$1,800 most expensive
$750 least expensive

MAX PROTETCH
Bernard Tschumi drawings
would not say price of most expensive
$2,800 least expensive
Michelle Stuart paintings
$22,000 most expensive
$12,000 least expensive

LAURIE RUBIN
Barry Bridgwood paintings
$8,500 most expensive
$3,000 least expensive

TONY SHAFRAZI
Group sculpture show
$100,000 most expensive (**Robert Smithson**)
$15,000 least expensive (**Michael Heizer**)

RUTH SIEGEL
Anne Abrons paintings
$3,000 all works

HOLLY SOLOMON
William Wegman paintings and drawings
$35,000 most expensive
$15,000 least expensive

SONNABEND
Anne and Patrick Poirier sculptures
$60,000 most expensive
$12,000 least expensive
Gilberto Zorio sculptures
$130,000 most expensive
$50,000 least expensive

SPERONE WESTWATER
Christopher LeBrun paintings
$42,000 most expensive
$12,500 least expensive
Don Gummer sculptures
$20,000 most expensive
$7,500 least expensive

STUX
Daniel Gendron paintings
$8,500 most expensive
$3,500 least expensive
Marc Travanti paintings
$2,600 most expensive
$1,200 least expensive

EDWARD THORP
Gregory Crane paintings
$18,000 most expensive
$5,000 least expensive

TWINING
Dorothy Dehner sculptures
$70,000 most expensive
$18,000 least expensive (maquette)

MICHAEL WALLS
Jerry Zeniuk paintings and drawings
$14,000 all four paintings
$1,500 all four drawings

WASHBURN
Bill Jensen paintings
$65,000 most expensive
$30,000 least expensive

JOHN WEBER
Sol LeWitt sculptures
$150,000 most expensive
$100,000 least expensive
Alice Aycock drawings
$15,000 most expensive
$10,000 least expensive

What Becomes a Legend Most

The phenomenal sums paid at auction last year for works by van Gogh reflect the artist's status as symbol and commodity. The author discusses the cultural implications of high-price art marketing.

BY CAROL ZEMEL

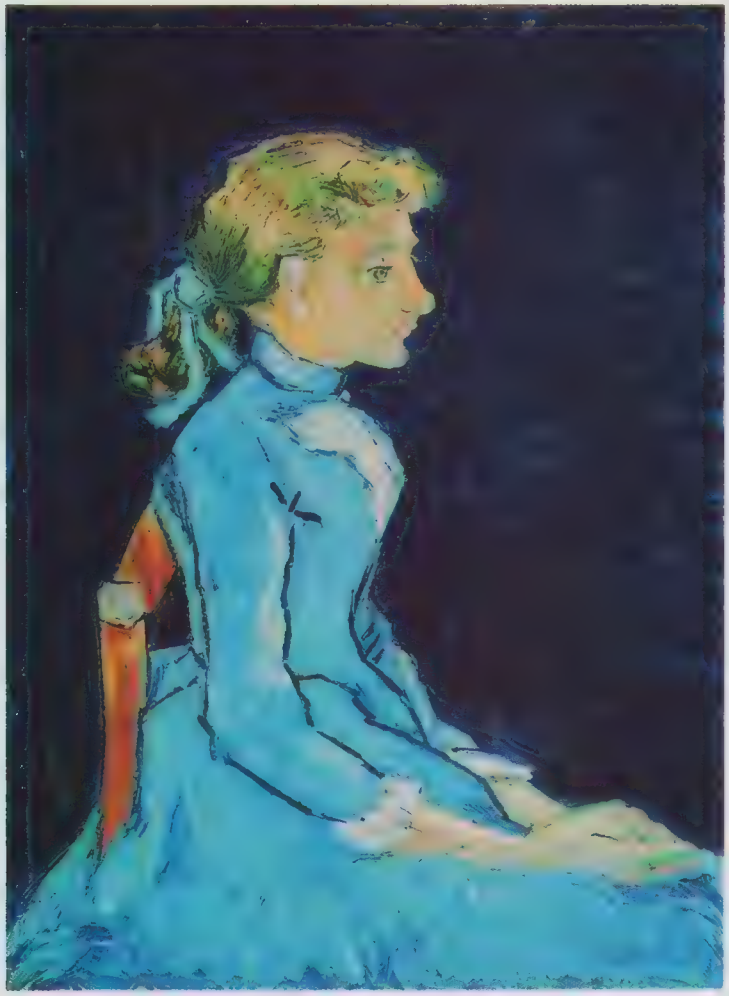
Last year's sales of four pictures by Vincent van Gogh unsettled the international art world. At $39.9 million and $53.9 million respectively, van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and *Irises* set new records for sales at public auction. *The Bridge at Trinquetaille* and *Portrait of Adeline Ravoux* earned, respectively, $20 million and $13.75 million for their owners; all four paintings topped previous highs for Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art. Initial reactions included shock, confusion and delight. Philippe de Montebello, director of the Metropolitan Museum, felt "like a fossil awakened from another era";[1] Christopher Burge, president of Christie's New York, who had estimated the *Sunflowers* at around $23 million, described its sale as an incomprehensible "stunning blow";[2] artist Jeff Koons hoped the *Irises* purchase meant expanded investment and better art prices generally.[3]

Beyond their sensationalism and glamour, such landmark events can and should be deciphered, for they mark the intersection of two fundamental discursive fields: international economics and international high culture. At their simplest and most concrete, the staggering price tags underscore what we consider artistically important. "We" refers mainly to collectors, curators, dealers—the managers and custodians of Euro-American culture, whose activities and interests shape an art market that now includes Japan and Australia as sites of cultural safekeeping and exchange. But as extraordinary repeat records based on the work of a single artist—a sort of cultural "Quadruple Crown"—these events also call attention to "Van Gogh" as a cultural construct, commodity—and champion.

On one level merely transactions between a very limited set of players, the sales nevertheless constitute a statement about certain pictures by a certain artist that loom large in mass consciousness. Thus, even as the pictures circulate from private collection to private collection, they enact a public play of representation that has its own puzzling or, more properly, mystifying relation to economic reality. "I liked the fact that it was a real painting by a real artist," Brice Marden told the *New York Times* after the *Irises* sale, "the money didn't seem real to me at all."[4] Art and money, public fascination and private exchange: how these zones intersect and

Vincent van Gogh:* Irises, *1889, oil on canvas, 28 by 36⅝ inches. Private collection, courtesy Sotheby's.

Vincent



Portrait of Adeline Ravoux, ***1890, oil on canvas, 29 by 21½ inches. Private collection, courtesy Christie's.***

Art and money, public fascination and private exchange: how these zones intersect and affect each other, and which lays greater claim to the real, are tantalizing and elusive issues.

affect each other, and which lays greater claim to the real, are tantalizing and elusive issues. And in this respect, "Van Gogh" serves as a perfect postmodern commodity. Enacted and realized in symbolic and concrete terms, the salesroom phenomenon of this artist and his work blurs conventional art-world boundaries.

Opinion about a painter as well-known and popular as van Gogh can be a telling cultural barometer, an effective way to read the issues and anxieties of a particular moment or period. Early in this century, for example, as German national consciousness grew, acceptance of van Gogh's art depended on whether it was perceived as a liberal French import ("die Dreckkunst aus Paris," the Kaiser called it), or as an embodiment of the "Gothic spirit," a "Northern" sensibility that would dislodge the hegemonic classicism of Latin culture. Similarly, the production of Vincent Minelli's film biography of the artist, *Lust for Life*, may be understood within the framework of the considerable cultural anxiety in this country in the 1950s, when all sectors of the arts were subject to congressional investigation, scrutiny and attack.[5] Van Gogh's popularity, his so-called "isolation" during his lifetime within a philistine environment, made him a potent signifier of the "modern artist" and the urgent struggle to create.

With the current sales, then, one might expect to find some new rehearsal of van Gogh clichés: his lack of success in his own day, his high-minded principles about art exhibitions and sales, and de rigueur, one would think, in the face of this embarrassment of riches, his sympathy for the working class and the poor. But, in fact, most of this goes unmentioned. What does surface is a fascination with sensational prices and with the art market as a kind of theater. Indeed, this time the pictures are eclipsed not by the terms of van Gogh's legend, but by the behaviors they inspire in the international world of private fortune and corporate capitalism.

One need only read a transcript of the bidding[6] to feel caught up in the excitement of the chase and the almost orgasmic race to ownership. Both *Sunflowers* and *Irises* were dispatched in around four minutes. Starting at a cool $15 million, the bidding for the *Irises* very quickly came down to a telephone contest between two secret voices—masked buyers represented by costumed agents in a public arena. Beyond the fascinations of this theater, however, van Gogh's fame and popularity invites a critique, for, of course, the audience is much wider than the 2,000 buyers, sellers and beautiful people crowded into the Christie's salesroom. Something belonging to "us"—historians, museum visitors, Sunday painters, motel room decorators, and hummers of Don McLean's *Starry, Starry Night*—something has been staged beyond our reach and intervention, reminding us of our limits in the world of high cultural property.

Only a few voices broached the issues of conspicuous consumption, artistic value or what we might call "cultural comparable worth." The *Christian Science Monitor* editorialized about "value" and wondered how it was derived. The *Monitor* compared the *Sunflowers*' $39.9 million to Reagan's inauguration costs ($16 million), and to a grant for a program on ethics at the Harvard Business School ($30 million). The *Washington Post* cited the cost of two F-16 fighter planes, a mile of interstate highway and the Seattle Mariners baseball team.[7] And Ellsworth Kelly's comment, "The van Gogh really earned it. They make those fighter planes at a drop of the hat,"[8] signaled the art community's pleasure at what *their* products could command.

Amusing as it is, the list of comparably priced commodities underscores the force of fetishized meaning concealed within the art commodity exchange. Of all these expenditures only art lays claim to some enduring esthetic "utility." Unlike highways, inaugural balls, baseball teams and even weapons of war, only art presumes to offer a universal and timeless value, a pure pleasure in the accomplishments of "the human spirit." What these prices validate are the unique products of an individual imagination *and* hand. They perpetuate a utopian conviction that original handmade works of art embody some ineffable essence, and that they signify a height of human achievement that transcends historical contingencies and circumstance. This kind of mystification, this loss of reality, is central to the masquerade of capital and what Jean Baudrillard calls its "radical law of equivalence and exchange." Detached from their own histories, the pictures are propelled higher and higher into stratospheric realms of speculation, accruing values that test the limits of the imagination. More than anything else, the van Gogh sales dramatize the sleight-of-hand juggling of cultural and economic realities. They call disquieting attention, in Baudrillard's terms, to the "unreality of the stakes and the omnipotence of manipulation."[9]

Van Gogh was "a strange man," says Christie's London auctioneer Charles Allsopp, "he wasn't very good at marketing. . . ." But Allsopp is wrong. Throughout his career, van Gogh devised schemes to market pictures and graphic work: he planned inexpensive, collaborative editions of prints; he organized group shows in Montmartre cafés; and he encouraged his brother Theo, who managed a branch of Boussod et Valadon in Paris, to open his own gallery and to promote the work of Vincent and his contemporaries. In fact, the art market both interested and worried van Gogh, and it raised much the same issues as have these recent sales. "I think that all the talk . . . of the high prices paid for Millets, etc., lately has made the chances of merely getting back one's painting expenses even worse," he wrote Theo in June 1890. "It is enough to make you dizzy. So why think about it?—it would only daze our minds. Better perhaps to seek a little friendship and live from day to day."[10] But van Gogh did think about it. His correspondence from the hospital in Saint-Rémy is often preoccupied with exhibition possibilities, critics, dealers and sales. And his last letter to his art dealer brother openly discusses the issue of market prices and ethical practice: "Things are very strained between dealers in pictures [by] dead artists, and living artists," the unmailed letter reads; "you are not among the dealers in men as I know it, and you can still choose your side, I think, acting with humanity, but que veux-tu?"[11]

With prices in the millions, today's market involves procedures that began in the early 1970s, when the major auction houses began to send their valuables on promotional tours. The practice has continued. Now van Gogh pictures are paraded through the hottest international marketplaces: London, New York, Geneva, Zurich and, since 1979, Tokyo. Much like the ritual display of a sacred relic, icon or beauty queen, selective exhibition enhances the picture's aura or glamour and enshrines its status as "masterpiece."

The spiraling prices for these pictures are linked, experts agree, to expanded activity in world money markets, and to the weakening dollar and strengthening mark and yen. A new group of international collectors with vast sums of money—"resources difficult to comprehend," as Christie's Impressionist specialist Michael Findlay put it—are eager and able to assemble private collections. There is some speculation about their identities: Alan Bond, the Australian beer magnate, is a repeated name, as are "the Japanese," who are perceived as a category rather than individual collectors. The *Wall Street Journal* described "an invasion" of Japanese buyers in New York and London auction rooms since the rise of the yen in the early '80s.[12] And New York dealer Richard Feigen stressed the investment concerns of these purchasers: ". . . They're having difficulty in placing their vast savings. Essentially, it's just money looking for a place to rest."[13] But precisely the opposite seems true of the *Sunflowers'* buyer, the Yasuda Fire & Marine Insurance Company of Tokyo. Indeed, the fact that their picture was painted in 1888, the same year that the company was founded, that it replaces a version of the *Sunflowers* lost in the bombing of Yokohama during World War II and that van Gogh considered Japan the site of a utopian culture and society "naturalizes" the purchase and its price. Still, some critics

The Bridge at Trinquetaille, ***1888, oil on canvas, 28¾ by 36¼ inches. Private collection, courtesy Christie's.***

Detached from their own histories, the van Gogh paintings are propelled into stratospheric realms of speculation, accruing values that test the limits of the imagination.

deride the feverish collecting impulses of these parvenus, and imply that the high prices constitute tasteless displays of ego rather than esthetic sensibility. "Only a newcomer, without an art collector's experience," Geraldine Norman suggested, "could pay such a price."[14] Sophisticated or naive, these are the acquisitive appetites of new megamillionaires. That their taste runs to Impressionist and Post-Impressionist pictures should be no surprise.

Once past the struggle for stylistic acceptance early in this century, late 19th-century French paintings held fast in the art market. And just as late 19th-century urban industrialist collectors gobbled up Barbizon pictures of unblemished nature or *la vie paysanne*, the postindustrial corporate collector finds Impressionist and Post-Impressionist landscapes and flower pieces soothing and peaceful. Manet's *Rue Mosnier with Street Pavers* sold for a resounding $11 million in December 1986, but the price of this urban street scene was easily surpassed by pleasure-filled images of leisure, landscape or still life. "These pictures seem otherworldly to us now," Michael Findlay claims; he suggests several other potential big-buck earners: a Lautrec, a Degas, a Cézanne, a Tahitian Gauguin would tap into that nostalgia for 19th-century fantasy.

Within this framework, the *Sunflowers* was very much the right picture at the right time. Overriding its darkened color and the fact that it is not a unique picture but one of a series of six, the happy content of the image and its popular status as an instantly recognizable van Gogh–icon assured its salesroom success. The same applies to the *Irises* with its close-up bank of spring flowers stretching toward the sky. The *Bridge at Trinquetaille*, on the other hand, stresses the structure of industrial modernity, not a picturesque river view. Deemed "the thinking man's van Gogh" by art experts for its subtle gray tones and elaborate perspective, it resists the ecstatic terms of the van Gogh legend, and is certainly less "pleasant" than the two flower pieces. And the gangly teenager pictured in the relatively little-known *Portrait of Adeline Ravoux* is hardly the same kind of crowd pleaser. But the high prices realized even by these two works suggest the spillover power of the other pictures, and that something of the mystifying construct "Van Gogh" is incorporated in these pictures' value as well.

Perhaps the most pressing and poignant issue raised by these events has to do with public access. Sales like these stimulate public curiosity and museum visits. Ronald de Leeuw, director of Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, may regret the "whispering of numbers" heard in front of his museum's *Sunflowers*, but Michael Findlay contends that "anything that gets you to look at art is good—no matter how salacious the motives." The purchasing power of the new collectors, however, virtually eliminates museums (save possibly the Getty) as players in this game. Gone are the days when the Metropolitan Museum could bring home Rembrandt's *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer*, purchased for $2.3 million in 1961; the $3-million commission paid on the *Sunflowers* alone exceeds the Met's annual purchase budget.

Changes in U.S. tax laws are also likely to affect museum gifts. With the Tax Reform Act of 1986, items like high-priced paintings donated to a museum most likely will be taxed through the Alternative Minimum Tax schedule. Simply put, the difference between the original purchase price and a picture's current market value is added to the AMT base and taxed at 21 percent (slightly lower than the regular 28 percent income tax rate). Thus, a painting originally purchased for $50,000 and currently valued at $1 million puts $950,000 into the donor's AMT base. The donor claims a deduction and pays tax at the same time. In the case of John Whitney Payson's *Irises*—purchased in 1947 for $84,000, appraised at $1 million in 1979, and estimated eight years later to be worth many millions more—tax would be computed on a very large amount with no profit or gain. The implications for multimillion-dollar art bequests and gifts are not always clear. But unless there is rapid turnover of these items, most experts agree that there is less incentive for collectors to donate their big-money pictures, and that such gifts to museums will drop. In effect, then, the government no longer subsidizes or rewards donations of tangible personal property to museums. Appropriate or not, manipulation of the tax system shapes cultural policies; it can effectively keep art out of the public domain.

There are other constraints on public access that arise from these sales. De Leeuw predicts soaring insurance costs will limit exhibition possibilities and loans. With his museum seeking to borrow in the most expensive sector of the market, de Leeuw fears some difficulty assembling the 1990 centenary exhibition of van Gogh's art. American museums enjoy a national indemnity scheme, whereby the government guarantees protection within certain ceilings for foreign loans. But even within this indemnification framework, the cost of major shows rises considerably, and exhibition practices become more heavily dependent than ever on corporate patronage.

The rewards and punishments of this kind of art marketing were felt most keenly with the *Irises* sale. The Joan Whitney Payson Memorial Art Gallery at Westbrook College lost what art critic Edgar Allen Beem called "the only world-class painting in the entire state of Maine." The picture's departure and disappearance into an unnamed private collection was sweetened somewhat by owner John Payson's promise to endow the college, the gallery and the state of Maine with a percentage of profits from the sale.[15] The *Maine Sunday Telegram* and *Portland Press Herald*, owned by Westbrook College trustee Guy Gannett, happily announced the plan. Of the $49 million Payson collected, the college will receive $6.1 million, the gallery $1.96 million and 12 pictures worth $9 million by artists such as Renoir and Degas. Maine's Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture will receive $1.2 million. Undisclosed amounts go to two other Maine organizations (the Gulf of Maine Aquarium is one of them), and the remainder will be put in a family trust.[16] In the face of these figures, it would seem petulant to lament the loss of the *Irises*. Still, for critic Beem, it was no great act of philanthropy. "The rich are the custodians of culture, and we get what they give us," he wrote in the Maine *Times*. "I'm not sure how to change that, but they are not to be applauded. . . ."[17] The removal of *Irises* from the gallery meant personal profit for the seller, along with whopping tax deductions. Payson chose, moreover, to liquidate an asset already provisionally installed in the public domain. No matter how much the college gallery will receive, the loss to the state and its public is not recuperable.

There is little doubt that along with their provenances, the pictures' exhibition record and the degree to which they were seen often enough to become "classics" within van Gogh's oeuvre substantially increased both the *Sunflowers'* and *Irises'* value. Both were well-known pictures, often shown and frequently reproduced. Payson's profits were doubtless enhanced by the *Irises'* featured position at the entrance to the 1986 "Van Gogh in Saint-Rémy and Auvers" exhibition at the Metropolitan, and its reproduction on a

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Fourteen Sunflowers in a Vase, *1888, oil on canvas, 36⅝ by 28¾ inches. Collection Yasuda Fire & Marine Insurance Co., courtesy Christie's.*

Showcase in Arcadia

BY KEN JOHNSON

[illegible] as it was to create the world's largest [illegible] contemporary art in [illegible] abandoned factory buildings [illegible] northwestern hinterlands of Massachusetts, MASS MOCA [illegible] a sure thing from very early on. Sprague Technologies, [illegible] had promised to donate its 13-acre, downtown North Adams complex to the cause and almost every political leader to whom the concept was presented—from North Adams Mayor John Barrett III on up—became an enthusiastic advocate for it. Even Governor and presidential candidate Michael Dukakis, seeking to extend the Massachusetts Miracle to a depressed area that had thus far resisted his state's manifest destiny of economic revitalization, pledged his wholehearted support long before anyone beyond a circle of insiders knew about the project. Thus, when plans for MASS MOCA were officially unveiled in the spring of 1987, the project was announced with considerable fanfare as a fait accompli, which, only incidentally, would depend on support from the state legislature to the tune of $35 million, a sum no one doubted would be readily forthcoming given Dukakis's blessing. (Costs for the total development were estimated at between $70 million and $100 million. The difference would be made up by contributions from federal, corporate and individual sources and from business sector investment, which would follow once the largest chunk—the $35 million—was secured.)

To be sure, skeptics everywhere wondered at the confidence with

Thomas Krens, mastermind of the huge and controversial museum of contemporary art in rural Massachusetts, has, he claims, seen the future of art museums, and MASS MOCA is the prototype he proposes

which such an unlikely venture was being projected. Why in the world would the state legislature take such generous interest in modernism and postmodernism, Minimalism and Neo-Expressionism, and all the rest? In fact, legislative interest in contemporary art was practically nil, but that was beside the point: as it was presented by Thomas Krens, mastermind of MASS MOCA, director of the Williams College Museum of Art in North Adams's neighbor Williamstown and soon to be director of New York's Guggenheim Museum, this was not only a museum or art center in the traditional sense. It was, in addition, a business proposition, an urban redevelopment package combining stores, a convention center, condominiums, restaurants and a hotel, for all of which the museum would serve as a catalyst and anchor. It was a project that promised to stabilize the shaky economic foundations of the blue-collar town of North Adams and of Northern Berkshire County. Over 600 jobs, a $7-million rise in personal income of the local population, $21 million in spending per year: the numbers projected by Krens's computer-generated charts and diagrams and Yale MBA expertise had everyone salivating. Proponents had no reason to think the proposal wouldn't find clear

One of the cavernous spaces at MASS MOCA's future site, the 19th-century Arnold Print Works Marshall Street Complex, North Adams, Mass. Photo John W. Kaufmann

Some of the Panza collection will now be seen for the first time—even by Panza, who sometimes bought only the rights to a still unrealized work.

sailing over the shoals of the Boston State House.

And, indeed, as it happened, no substantial political opposition to MASS MOCA ever materialized; nevertheless, MASS MOCA nearly died before it got out of the legislature. What almost killed it was a legislative strategy that should have guaranteed MASS MOCA funding, but almost resulted in the opposite. Figuring the bill would have its best chance for passage if it were tied in with proposals for big convention center–type projects from other parts of the state, the Dukakis administration sought passage of a $130-million bond issue which would fund MASS MOCA as well as 20 other projects.

That bill was stalled, however, by a political conflict between the state House of Representatives and the Senate. It seems the Senate, in passing the bill, had added a provision to create a permanent, multimillion-dollar annual subsidy for a convention center in Boston called the Hynes Auditorium. House leaders balked at that provision because, among other reasons too complicated to explain here, a longtime aide to Senate President William Bulger had been appointed director-for-life of the Hynes. The impasse was particularly distressing for MASS MOCA supporters. If the bill didn't get passed by the end of the legislative session, it appeared there would be no second chance: Sprague Technologies was committed to holding its 28 or so buildings only until the end of the legislative session, after which the company said it would be forced to seek some other way to divest itself of a vacant property that was costing a million dollars a year to heat and maintain. (At one time, Sprague, a manufacturer of electrical parts, had been the city of North Adams's major business, employing 4,000 workers in 1970.)

A mood of crisis built as winter approached. The economic life of half a county seemingly hung on passage of the bill, and local legislators and other community leaders lobbied hard for a compromise between the Senate and the House. In November, Cory Thurston, president of the Northern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, started a petition drive that netted over 10,000 signatures within two weeks. A delegation of civic leaders chartered a bus to go to Boston to personally deliver the petition.

In the end, all the lobbying, the phone calls, the Governor's promises and arm-twisting worked; but, dishearteningly, it was too late. At about 11 p.m. on January 5, the last day of the session, Senate President Bulger finally agreed to deletion of the Hynes provision. By then, however, there wasn't enough time to put the documents in proper order. At midnight, the bill died and with it, apparently, MASS MOCA. The next day, a discouraged Williams College President Francis Oakley announced it was time for the college to put aside thoughts of MASS MOCA, time to cut losses and move on to other projects. But what Oakley didn't know as he laid MASS MOCA to rest was that in the wee hours of the morning, Dukakis, unwilling to give up on a project that promised to draw international attention to his support of culture and his daring and innovative approach to economic revitalization, had been on the phone securing renewed commitments from Sprague, North Adams and Krens. Dukakis said he'd file a new, separate bill to fund MASS MOCA alone; he had promises of support from Senate President Bulger and from Speaker of the House George Keverian. If everyone would stay the course, Dukakis said, he'd get the bill passed in ten days.

It took two and a half months. There was some opposition from legislators who wondered why such a little town should get so much money for such an exclusive project before everyone else—such as the Worcester delegation which wanted $30 million for its convention center—could get theirs, but finally the two-thirds majority required to pass bonding authorization was won over. On March 22, Dukakis signed the bill and, at last, MASS MOCA's most formidable hurdle was cleared.

Today, MASS MOCA exists mainly on paper and it still must pass a series of tests—a new feasibility study, an environmental impact report, and approval by the state Office of Administration and Finance, which will disperse the $35 million. A non-profit governing body has been appointed under the aegis of North Adams. Called the Northern Berkshire County Cultural Development Corporation, it will see that those studies are done and take care of all subsequent steps in the development of the museum. (The members of the commission had not yet been announced at this writing.)

At this point, there really is no reason to think the museum won't be ultimately realized. What visitors will find when the doors open as planned in 1991 or so remains largely a matter for speculation. Nevertheless, the basic outlines of controversy that must inevitably attend to a project of such ambitious, not to say hubristic, scale, expense and originality are already apparent. What's fascinating about the discussion is the way MASS MOCA stands, for better or worse, as an ultimate culmination—indeed, an embodiment—of tendencies brewing in the museum world over the past 25 years. As such, it has become a political and philosophical football for those who care about where museums are going at the end of one century and the beginning of another.

Undeniably, the museum as proposed offers a number of extraordinarily exciting possibilities. The site itself is a magnificent hodgepodge of large 19th-century brick factory buildings crowded onto a tapering peninsula that divides the north and south branches of the Hoosick River. Overhead, enclosed catwalks string the buildings together so that it is possible to tour the whole complex without going outdoors. Inside are level upon level of cavernous wood-floored interiors divided by endless rows of columns. If the renovation of this architecture is handled sensitively (Robert Venturi and Frank Gehry have both toured the site) it will surely in itself constitute a major attraction. Krens has argued that the nature of the site is critical to the success of the museum: "The project really has an enormous amount to do with the fact that this rather incredible space exists and that the space has great character.... Indeed, it has attracted and captured the imagination of the people who we need to contribute art and support, basically from an international base" ("Krens outlines his strategy for funding museum," *The Advocate*, Oct. 21, 1987).

(This is not, incidentally, Krens's first entrepreneurial scheme involving the North Adams mills. As a young instructor at Williams College teaching a course on art and commerce, he collaborated with three students to start a company called Alliance Editions that printed high-art images on T-shirts. The company, which grew to employ 18 people and lasted for ten years, operated in Windsor Mill, another abandoned factory in North Adams.)

The 28 or so Sprague buildings offer intriguing possibilities for art installation. There is the much-ballyhooed square footage of exhibition space—400,000 compared to, for instance, the Whitney's 26,000—which will enable presentation of huge-scale works like those included in the collection of Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo and which are difficult to exhibit elsewhere. And indeed, Panza has agreed to some major long-term loans, the first such to be committed to MASS MOCA.

Some of the works from the Panza collection will be seen for the first time by anyone—even by the Italian collector himself. Panza explained in a telephone interview that when he was buying Minimal and Conceptual works 20 years ago, he would sometimes purchase only the plans for a work, along with the right to realize it. Because of lack of space, a group of these works—including pieces by Morris, Judd, Nauman, Flavin and others—were never made. (Some were fabricated recently, and are currently on view at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid [through December], whence they are slated eventually to go to North Adams.) To be able to see these and other works heretofore unavailable to American audiences, says Panza, will bring about "a radical change" in the way people think about art of the '60s and '70s. "This has been a new development in art. Before, the work of art was a small or medium-sized object. Now space has become part of the work of art. At MASS MOCA, it will be possible to see an important part of American art which now is impossible to see. It will be an international attraction."

As of this writing, two other significant bodies of work are committed to join the 150 pieces from Panza: the collection of Michael and Ileana Sonnabend will supply 70 works, and that of Charles and Doris Saatchi will be sending works by at least five artists. All of this work will be on long-term loan. Artists slated for inclusion from these sources and others range from classic Minimalists and Conceptualists like Judd, Flavin, LeWitt, Weiner and Kosuth to recent postmodernists like Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Jonathan Borofsky, Julian Schnabel and Meyer Vaisman. Francesco Clemente, Richard Long, Robert Morris and others are also considering executing site-specific works. And certain artists will be seen in great depth—currently, for example, plans exist for an entire floor divided into multiple gallery spaces all exhibiting work by Robert Morris. And if it pans out, what will likely draw more attention to MASS MOCA than anything else will be the triannual American version of Documenta that Krens plans.

Next to the sexy allure of big-name collections and a Documenta-type show, the museum's sibling institution, the Museum of Architecture, may assume a lower profile, but it could well turn out to be one of MASS MOCA's most valuable assets, being derived—again, on long-term loan—from the unparalleled collection of contemporary architectural drawings and models from the German Museum of Architecture in Frankfurt. Founded in 1979 by Heinrich Klotz, the German Museum's collection includes 35,000 drawings, 150 paintings and 550 scale models, most of which languish in storage. Under the supervision of Klotz, a major portion of this collection will be brought to North Adams where it will be exhibited in its own 60,000-square-foot building.

Probably the least predictable aspect of MASS MOCA is its planned computerization. Krens has declared his intent to make it the most technologically advanced museum in the world. What this means beyond the electronicization of normal museum chores—data management, record keeping, etc.—no one knows, but personnel at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., who are being consulted by Krens and staff, hope that MASS MOCA might become a world center for computer-facilitated art-historical research as well as for studio production and presentation of electronic arts (video, computer-related art works, electronic music, etc.) with state-of-the-art production and performance facilities and international electronic networking.

And finally there is the commercial development, which will occupy 30 percent of the total MASS MOCA complex. This is an aspect that the more high-minded of us might frown upon. But who other than the most puritanical would be immune to the lure of one of the largest art bookstores in the world, which Krens says Rizzoli is

An Interview with Thomas Krens

Giuseppe Panza di Biumo (left) and Thomas Krens. Photo John M. Kuykendall.

MASS MOCA and geography

We are nested here in the midst of a significant collection of resources. The Williams College Museum, the Clark Institute, the Williamstown Regional Conservation Lab with 17 full-time conservators, one of the best art libraries in the U.S. [at the Clark], an undergraduate and graduate program in art history [at Williams] of surpassing strength. . . . There is a talent pool here, a relatively inexpensive, highly trained and highly dedicated labor force, to work on this project.

We also have a visitorship—there is a habit in place. The Clark has 120,000 visitors a year. We [at Williams] even have close to 100,000 a year, discounting students. In 1985, tourist spending in Berkshire County was $100 million, and 88 percent of that took place in Southern Berkshire County [Williamstown and North Adams are in Northern Berkshire county]. The prospect of diverting people to this area makes sense. The only problem that you have to overcome is essentially the question, will people come from metropolitan areas to see this kind of work? We live in a world now where space and mobility have radically changed. People now live in Williamstown and the Berkshires on weekends and travel to New York [to work]. People will go distances. People will travel to see special exhibitions.

Programming preview

It should be the kind of place that people would want to come back to often. Particularly if we do the kind of programming that we'd like to do here. There's a popular conception in the press that somehow it's only the Panza Collection we're talking about. [A few weeks ago] I was in Germany talking to

Anselm Kiefer about giving him a building. He'd come here and make a series of paintings that would never have to leave and they'd be essentially things made for the space. He's planning to come here some time in the near future. We're talking with the Arte Povera group, and obviously we're talking to the people represented in the Panza Collection . . . Morris and Flavin. . . . The Flavin things are spectacular. They're baroque things. They're not difficult-to-get-at conceptual art. The Panza works that are installed at the Reina Sofía in Madrid are absolutely fabulous; Flavin comes off as one of the artists of the century. But we're also talking to Francesco Clemente, Georg Baselitz, artists who would really make a major impact. Red Grooms is also a natural for a large-scale place like this. We're talking about Nam June Paik, James Turrell, Richard Long. The artists we have in mind will make the aggregation of this collection absolutely staggering.

If there existed near Williamstown, Mass., the largest museum of contemporary art in the world, a place where you could see 30 Anselm Kiefers at a certain time; where you could see Robert Morris from 1960 to 1988, from his performance work to Minimalist pieces to other things; if you could see the largest museum of contemporary architecture in the United States; and you could see all of that in a fabulous 19th-century mill complex—you tell me if you'd come here. I don't think anybody really understands the tangible excitement that can generate from something that takes place on this scale.

On the evolution of MASS MOCA

When you look at it on the bottom line you're talking about an immense project. Leaving the art aside, you're talking about a project that's going to cost between 70 and 100 million dollars. That's not small stuff. When you put together as complex a deal as this, you have to build credibility. A year ago, before we got state appropriation, it wasn't likely we could be instantly credible—that just because it was a good idea, everybody would be rushing up here to give their art collections away. Since then, there has been a change in stature of the project on a number of fronts. Most collectors take comfort in the fact that the state of Massachusetts is providing $35 million for the enterprise; they may also take comfort in the fact that I will also be the director of the Guggenheim, and that there is a reputation of conservative responsibility in that institution. You have to realize how far we've come with this project. As time goes by, we get the money, we build the enterprise, it looks good. The smart collector, if he sees it revolving the right way, will then try to get in on the ground floor.

Commercial development was part of the original conception. We see MASS MOCA as a small city. To say that it's a museum and the gates close at 4:45 in the afternoon and the place becomes barren seems to me to be a contradiction in terms. What about the possibility of connecting the complex to downtown North Adams, to main streets, to making it part of the town, part of the city? We have 20 acres . . . there are roads that go through the complex. The possibility of stores, businesses, housing in the complex we like very much. We like that integration on a conceptual level.

On the operating budget

We're basically saying that we're going to run a museum that is 30 times the size of the exhibition space of the Williams College Museum with a staff that's roughly the same size, not counting security staff. We start out looking at an absolutely slim operation. We're not going to pretend to be the Whitney Museum or MOMA or any place else. We will deal with our security issues in what we feel is the most intelligent way. That is, we will not have one guard in every gallery space. We'll have a strong technological component so we'll be able to do a lot of monitoring by television.

For all practical purposes, we'll probably do only one special exhibition per year. And that exhibition will not be part of the budget. It will be a mega-exhibition that will probably be fully funded by corporate support from the outside. Personally, I think that we can attract an enormous amount of attention to this project and some fairly substantial revenue streams. I'm not going to claim that on an income line at this point, but I think the income potential for something like this is quite astonishing.

Business skills to serve art

I don't see that I have a predisposition for business more than anybody else. There's predominantly an art orientation in my background. What I'm interested in doing is being a curator, in making exhibitions, that's what I find interesting.

I've approached the concept of operating and managing museums from the perspective of strategy and language. What I mean by strategy is, if I want to be a curator, I can either dedicate myself furiously to designing exhibitions and try to get somebody else to take them on as projects, or I can approach it strategically, which is to make sure that I can control the means by which exhibitions can be made. The point is, you develop the context for being able to program. It's unrealistic not to recognize that museums are complex organizations and that how you speak is extremely important. Some art historians take French; I studied computers and business. I can speak that in a very powerful way because I know how. All the graphics that you see around here are generated by me or two of the people that work with me. Those things express information very succinctly. We're very good at explaining ourselves. And it's not just in verbal ways, it's both in conceptual terms and in visual terms and in spatial terms. [The computer] is an extension [of me as a curator]. I'm not interested in it per se. If you think that I like being here until midnight every night, screwing around with graphs on my computer, you're crazy. What I like to do is the kind of thing we're doing right now, this big German show we've been working on for three years. [Though dates are still tentative, "Refigured Painting: The German Image, 1960–1988" (co-organized by the Guggenheim Museum and the Williams College Museum of Art) will open at the Toledo Museum of Art in late October and will subsequently appear at the Guggenheim; the Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf, and the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt.]

People ask me a lot about what kind of exhibitions I want to do at the Guggenheim. I say I want to do exhibitions that are critically definitive and historically necessary. For the Guggenheim, we're looking at doing a major Robert Morris show. A Robert Morris retrospective would be a tight fit in the Guggenheim. It would fit better in the Guggenheim simultaneously with MASS MOCA.

On an American Documenta

We have been discussing the possibility of doing a Documenta-type project here, a regular triannual thing. We have 500,000 square feet in North Adams; there are two museums in Williamstown; right behind this building [the Williams College Museum] there's a hockey rink field house that's not in use during the summer that could be converted to exhibition space. We have lots of open park-like space around the campus [for outdoor sculpture].

Why hasn't a Documenta been done in the U.S.? The big international exhibitions that are best known—Documenta, the Venice and São Paulo Biennials—are government enterprises. In the U.S., art is virtually a private venture. Our tax laws have reflected that historically. The NEA is not in the business of organizing Documenta-type shows and there is no other state agency or federal agency that could do it.

So who would have the imagination and the resources to be able to do an American Documenta? Most people would think automatically of having it in the big city, because that's where the resources are. But you can't get a 100-day exhibition in the big city. You can't do it in the Jacob Javits Center [in New York]; it would cost a fortune. They get a bigger turnover on trade fairs that are only up five days at a time. There is no other exhibition space in New York or in any other big city to do that.

Well, here we are in Massachusetts—a tourist area. In summer the sun always shines in the purple valley, close to New York, close to Boston, relatively good links. It could be funded like the Olympics. Not as big, but done the right way. . . . You've seen a revolution in the Olympics since Los Angeles. They called it the marketing of the Olympics. If we really start to do a Documenta—if we've got MASS MOCA under our belts and we approach it the right way—I'm absolutely certain we could get corporate support to do it. Because the budget's not a big one: Documenta in Germany is a 15 million dollar budget, so we look for a 20 million dollar budget. If it were the biggest art exhibition in the world, you'd probably come. I think people would come from everywhere.

—K.J.

Aerial view of the MASS MOCA site on the peninsula dividing the north and south branches of the Hoosick River.

thinking of opening at MASS MOCA? (Public relations personnel at Rizzoli said these plans are "tentative" at this writing. According to Harry N. Abrams publishing company president Paul Gottlieb, Abrams, too, had considered using MASS MOCA space for warehousing, but decided not to because it was feared that inclement wintertime weather might impede shipping. Gottlieb says he also thought about opening a bookstore there but is no longer considering that possibility.) Other commercial attractions are currently unspecified as talks with developers are only just beginning, but it's likely computerware and high-style designer commodities will be on sale. Also envisioned are a deluxe hotel, restaurants, condominium dwellings for artists-in-residence and a 60,000-square-foot convention center to be used for a wide range of functions, from art exhibitions to performances to trade fairs.

Imagining this glittering Emerald City of art set in the midst of Berkshire County's bucolic splendor, you might well wonder whether it's not all too good to be true. Perhaps it is. But then, as Antonio Homem says (as director of the Sonnabend Gallery, he is involved in the long-term loan to MASS MOCA of Ileana Sonnabend's collection), "If [Tom Krens] manages to do half of what he intends, then anyone who is interested in art will go there."

Brooklyn Museum director (and Williams College graduate) Robert Buck, who asked Krens to do a financial reorganization plan for his museum when Krens was working for his MBA at Yale, says he has "100 percent confidence" that Krens can accomplish his aims. Buck calls MASS MOCA "a wonderful idea," and he asks, "Where else in the United States can you see such large installations except in the Southwest?" (Indeed, the various large-scale, single-artist projects of the DIA Foundation alone can be seen as anticipating MASS MOCA.) London art dealer Anthony d'Offay, who handles several artists to be included at MASS MOCA, echoes Buck's praise for the museum: "The idea of showing artists in depth one thinks of as a European rather than an American idea." MASS MOCA, says d'Offay, "will change the face of the way one looks at contemporary art in America."

Richard Koshalek, director of L.A. MOCA, points out that his own museum, with its Frank Gehry–rehabbed industrial space, the Temporary Contemporary, and its own important portion of the Panza collection, has been, along with Schaffhausen in Switzerland, an inspirational ancestor to MASS MOCA. He calls MASS MOCA "a very exciting project. The space as described to me by Panza sounds terrific. And Krens has selected the right collections to be involved." Of Krens, Koshalek says, "He's a very dynamic character. There's a chance that he can make it happen."

However, MASS MOCA's reception thus far has not been universally warm, at least not close to home where the project is being cautiously watched by the Massachusetts art world and has been the subject of intense ongoing debate. You hear qualified expressions of enthusiasm—"You can't be in contemporary art and not be excited about a considerable body of important work being made available," says Katy Kline, director of MIT's List Visual Arts Center. And, notes David Ross, director of Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, "The overall concept is a great one." But it's also, adds Ross, "very controversial: not a week goes by that someone doesn't bring up the question to me."

Essentially, the question is this: If the state government is going to invest this unheard-of amount of money in contemporary art, is this the best way to do it? For those who think not, there are two basic lines of objection, one practical and the other philosophical. On the practical side, it is argued that the project simply won't work—that MASS MOCA cannot attract the 150,000 paying visitors per year it will need, according to the feasibility study done by Krens to balance its budget and to generate the various economic spinoffs projected (the *New York Times* reports $3 as the projected price of admission). Although most admit a lot of people will be attracted at first by the novelty of MASS MOCA, critics don't think the museum can sustain such high attendance over the long haul. Skeptics say the avant-garde art to be shown won't appeal to the Berkshire County audience. The most popular museum in the area is the Clark

The main courtyard of the complex.
Photo John M. Kuykendall.

Art Institute, an admission-free museum best-loved for its collection of Impressionists, which, according to Krens's study, gets 120,000 visitors a year (the Clark's 1987 annual report says 115,000 for its most recent year; 91,413 and 103,615 in its two previous years). The study assumes that most of these visitors will naturally be drawn to MASS MOCA, just five miles away. But, says Debra Balken, curator of art at the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, "To assume MASS MOCA can top the audience of the Clark, the collections of which are eminently more accessible and popular, is almost naive." The Berkshire County audience, says Balken, is "culturally conservative." Some people question, too, whether needed audiences from New York and Boston—both three hours away by car—will make repeated visits, considering that there will be only one special exhibition per year. "Some people will make pilgrimages to it, but pilgrimages don't pay bills," says Kathy Halbreich, former director of MIT's List Art Center and now an independent curator.

Krens counters that the art to be exhibited at MASS MOCA will not be so inaccessible as is commonly thought. "We're talking about getting Red Grooms to do an installation," says Krens, and he argues that even a Minimalist like Dan Flavin can be a crowd pleaser. Indeed, Krens thinks MASS MOCA's yearly attendance will approach 500,000. He thinks people are inclined to travel distances these days to visit cultural attractions. Krens notes, "We have had some inquiries from tour operators who want to run a special train out of Grand Central. One virtue is that the railroad track comes right through the property of MASS MOCA. We could build our own station." He believes that people will return again and again, as they do to the Museum of Modern Art. And it is certainly true that as a whole the museum's appeal will be broader than if it were only a repository of avant-garde art.

Aside from the Minimalism, Arte Povera and Neo-Expressionism in the galleries, the ground floor marketplace with its 19th-century village atmosphere will surely attract people the way Boston's Faneuil Hall or New York's South Street Seaport do. Besides the hard-core art crowd, MASS MOCA ought to attract students of architecture looking to investigate the holdings of the architecture museum, history buffs interested in the preservation of the historic mill, disposable-income-wielding shoppers browsing through the yup-scale boutiques and at least some of the hordes of tourists who swarm all over Berkshire County in the summer and who will naturally be drawn to anything labeled "the biggest in the world."

Another much-discussed practical issue is the operating budget, which Krens's original feasibility study projects at $1.8 million. "That's a questionable figure," observes Ross, whose far smaller Boston ICA (8,000 square feet) is also budgeted at $1.8 million. Katy Kline says, "I don't think the budget is realistic in the slightest bit." Krens has argued that MASS MOCA will be at first "an absolutely slim operation." Much of the kind of work to be displayed, he has said, will not require climate control or direct guarding. There will be a staff of just 30 people, not counting security, and the one major yearly exhibition will be funded by outside sources. Critics say, however, that on such a slim budget, MASS MOCA will not be able to do the kind of programming—educational programs, outreach, varied exhibitions, etc.—that funding agencies look for when they give money. But Krens says he thinks that as MASS MOCA gains credibility and becomes real, he's going to be able to raise a lot more money for operations than he could reasonably predict in his original feasibility study.

That feasibility study itself—which was used to persuade the legislature to approve the $35-million bond issue—has been questioned by critics who've wondered how objective it could be, given that it was done by Krens himself. Krens has said that he and his team, which includes another MBA holder—Joseph Thompson—besides himself, have the expertise to conduct such a study. He also points out that faculty members from Yale, where he earned his MBA, and the Wharton School, where Thompson earned his, reviewed the study.

According to Thompson, it will not necessarily be Williams College that will do the second study, a six-month-long investigation which must prove to the state Office of Administration and Finance that MASS MOCA can operate without a deficit before the $35 million will be released. It will be up to the newly formed Northern Berkshire County Cultural Development Corporation, says Thompson, to appoint whoever does that feasibility study, and to pay for it with a $1-million or so advance on the $35 million. But John Hanson, of Administration and Finance, says his office will not object if the Krens team is selected to do the feasibility study; he also says that the second study could be "simply an updated version of the work [Williams has already] done."

Critics are worried that this is in fact what will happen. "That Williams is doing the feasibility study is dangerously close to unethical," says Kline. Critics would like to see this second feasibility report done by outside, disinterested professionals. Asked about such questions of credibility, Tom Spofford, assistant secretary for Administration and Finance, says those objections "presume there is no appropriately critical faculty in state government to make sure the proper issues are addressed." Spofford says the State Division of Capital Planning and Operations, which oversees and implements state construction projects, will give rigorous scrutiny to the second feasibility study, whoever does it.

Finally, a lot of people are wondering how Krens is going to direct the Guggenheim Museum, where he takes over this summer, and the development of MASS MOCA at the same time (in addition to continuing to teach some classes at Williams). "It's optimistic to think that either of those jobs can be part-time," says Kline. Obviously Krens, famous for his 90-hour work weeks, thinks he can do it. A lot will depend, too, on what kind of executive staff he can assemble.

For Massachusetts art people, the debate about such practical matters is extremely important because the way MASS MOCA turns out could have an enormous effect on all the arts in their state. If the project succeeds on the bottom line—if it pays its own way and makes good on its promises of economic revitalization—then everyone will be happy. "It's important for all of us that it work," says

Ross. Failure could be catastrophic, because a deficit-ridden MASS MOCA could eat up a lot of a finite amount of state arts funding and, what's worse, deal a severe blow to political sympathy for state support of culture. As a sinking giant, MASS MOCA could drag down arts organizations statewide with it. Thus the real crux of the practical side of the controversy is the sense that Krens is gambling with the fates not just of himself and MASS MOCA but of a lot of other people and institutions as well. Says Halbreich, "The potential for success and failure is the same degree, but failure could be much more devastating than success could be invigorating."

More broadly interesting are the philosophical questions posed by the MASS MOCA project. To explore them is to inquire into the fundamental purposes of the art museum at the end of the 20th century, and Krens seems uniquely positioned right now in terms of power and influence to define those issues. Indeed, for Krens, MASS MOCA is not just another art museum and not just the biggest art museum; it is, rather, the solution to the museum crisis, a model for the future.

The crisis, to summarize Krens's analysis, begins with the growing financial squeeze: museum revenues, fueled from 1965 to 1980 by dramatic increases in attendance and NEA, state and corporate funding, are now leveling off, while museum expenses—salaries, insurance, operation costs, etc.—are soaring. Meanwhile, because of lack of space, major museums in big cities can exhibit only small fractions of their permanent collections. Not only does a lot of work disappear into storage, but a lot of significant art made since World War II is too big to exhibit in any depth in conventional museums. And, furthermore, many important collections of contemporary art have been assembled in recent years by private collectors who would like to donate to public museums but can't find institutions that can accommodate their holdings.

Another aspect of the collections problem, according to Krens, is the open-ended, encyclopedic nature of most major permanent collections of contemporary art. Krens argues that the typical collection, offering one or two works from each major artist, doesn't enable an in-depth engagement with contemporary art, and also that survey-type collections from coast to coast all begin to look boringly similar.

MASS MOCA does seem to furnish solutions to many of these problems. Its associated commercial development will provide steady rental income—an estimated $600,000-plus annually—acting, says Krens, like an endowment. The space problem is obviously solved, and incidentally MASS MOCA's ample acreage provides for another potential financial advantage: the museum should be able to acquire oversize works of art relatively cheaply because few other institutions want them. Krens admits that one day, MASS MOCA's collection, too, may inevitably exhaust its immense capacity. But perhaps that point will not soon be reached, because the museum's collection is not seen as open-ended—it is intended to cover the period from 1960 to 1990.

This line of thought seems eminently reasonable. Yet those who question MASS MOCA on philosophical grounds are distressed by the degree to which the entire concept seems to have been shaped by such logistical considerations. No one denies the high quality of the art that Krens is lining up, or that MASS MOCA, if it succeeds, will be a must-see for anyone interested in contemporary art. But some people are wondering exactly how Krens conceives MASS MOCA's intellectual mission. What kind of institution can we expect to emerge when availability of space, availability of funding and availability of private collections are defining development, and when esthetic purposes have only been vaguely, albeit glowingly, articulated in terms of world-class quality, blue-chip names and large

Those who question MASS MOCA on philosophical grounds are distressed that the entire concept seems dictated mainly by practical considerations.

scale? "I'm not sure what motivates the whole thing," says Kline. "I'm troubled by a place where selection of art is dictated by expediency and availability. I don't see a cohesive vision."

In a related vein, critics have also questioned the seemliness of a museum developed around borrowed collections. Material from the Panza collection, MASS MOCA's first major "acquisition," is to be on loan for six years, after which there will be an option for the museum to buy. Works from the Saatchi and the Sonnabend collections will also be on long-term loan. Conceivably, a collector could use the museum's exposure and cachet to boost his collection's market value, and then remove his collection if he received a good enough offer elsewhere. Kline says that as a rule, museums should accept only outright gifts "without *any* conditions" to guard against donor caprice or manipulation. New Museum director Marcia Tucker, noting the preponderance of loans in MASS MOCA's prospective "collection," says pointedly, "The National Endowment for the Arts doesn't fund exhibitions of private collections. It's not the museum's function to feed back into the market."

Krens says, however, that MASS MOCA will not be as dependent on loaned collections as it at first appeared. "We're not interested in making the museum a collection of collections," he says. "In our discussions with artists and collectors, we do make it clear that there are some curatorial prerogatives we'll want to exercise." And now that he's got the state's $35 million to back up MASS MOCA's credibility, he says, "In the last two months we've been talking a different story: gifts. We want a permanent collection."

Still, the museum's mission remains unclear. Will it be a place that engages people intellectually by virtue of a provocative program of esthetic, historical or critical ideas? Or is it being designed as an art-world extravaganza in which art's communication of ideas, values and feelings, and the intellectual discourse surrounding the art, is drowned out by dazzling spectacle? Because for MASS MOCA to succeed, it's going to have to be spectacular. "Everything that adds to the spectacular nature of it adds to its chances for success," points out Ross. "The question is whether any of this is appropriate to the appreciation and presentation of art." Says Tucker, "It's a very gargantuan enterprise in a period when interest in contemporary art would seem to merit it. Anything that commands high prices will be attended; that's why there is this huge audience for art." But Tucker also wonders about the exigencies that are created when a museum starts out on such a scale, and when success must be calculated in large measure by attendance. Can such a museum afford to do anything that won't draw great numbers of people? "Some of our most successful shows [at the New Museum] are our *least* successful shows," points out Tucker.

Krens envisions a sophisticated computer system that visitors will be able to use to learn about art, but this, too, tends to highlight the same problem: Are we talking about high culture or show business? Is Krens a Barr or a Barnum? The answer is not altogether clear. "I still don't know where the curatorial imperative is," says Halbreich. "We know that there's the potential for this really beautiful facility, but it's like a Russian egg—we don't know what's inside it." Krens says that he wants to do at MASS MOCA what he wants to do at the Guggenheim: "Exhibitions that are critically definitive and historically necessary"—an ambitious and indisputably noble agenda, but

Untitled Donald Judd works, 1972 to 1976, from the Panza Collection; currently installed at the Reina Sofía, Madrid.

one that doesn't really say much about what kind of values are at stake.[1]

The political/philosophical problem with MASS MOCA is partly that thus far it's been a one-man enterprise. And given Krens's entrepreneurial bent, you don't sense the kind of tension between esthetic and business imperatives that you might hope to find in such an undertaking. Thus far, there's been little formative influence on MASS MOCA from anyone (besides Krens) with a longstanding involvement in contemporary art, whether as a historian, curator or critic. If, as Ross declares, "it's the people who energize it—that's what makes a great museum," then in a fundamental way, what kind of museum MASS MOCA will be—as a dynamic institution and not just a fabulous collection of objects—remains unknown. "What's the community?" asks Ross. "Who are the trustees? Where are the Marcia Weismans, the Eli Broads?" (Ross's implied comparison to Los Angeles's MOCA seems doubly relevant when one remembers that it, too, finally came into being as part of a big-bucks urban rehabilitation project.) "Los Angeles is a city with incredibly ambitious and generous individuals who are really devoted to contemporary art," continues Ross. "Who are those people in North Adams? The city council? The mayor? They're all fine people, but they haven't a clue about contemporary art; there's no knowledge or passion except for an economic revitalization program. What will they think about that work—the Minimalism or some of the newer psycho-social painting—when they're asked to stand behind it?"

By all accounts, Krens is a man of considerable brilliance. For confirmation one need only look at the way he developed the Williams College Museum of Art from a sleepy little study collection into a big, active college museum whose Charles Moore–designed expansion has garnered national attention and attendance figures close to those of the Clark. One finds similar testimony, presumably, in the financial reorganization plan for the Brooklyn Museum that he did for his MBA thesis at Yale. And the faith that the Guggenheim has placed in him counts for a lot, too. Still he remains something of an enigma, having only recently achieved name-recognition beyond an exclusive museum-world inner circle. And even now that everybody knows his name, it is more for his promise than for what he's done that he is celebrated. He is, it seems, the wave of the future personified.

However it turns out, MASS MOCA is going to bring about some profound changes in how people think about art and museums in America. The debate it has precipitated has only just begun. Some of those who have publicly objected to the project—whatever the merits of their arguments—might be seen as motivated by merely local concerns and, one might suspect, professional rivalry. On the other hand, few museum people from outside the region were willing to comment when asked their opinion of the project, perhaps because of the dearth of substantial information currently available about MASS MOCA. Meanwhile, expressions of enthusiasm have tended to ring hollow because they come either from people who are already in some way involved in the project or from people who are simply predisposed to support bold new ideas. In most ways, Krens is still the only one who can define discourse on the subject.

As basic awareness of the museum becomes established in the art-world consciousness, however, one can imagine lines of deeper inquiry being pursued. Is the space crunch really the most pressing issue for museums today? What other models might there be for solving the museum crisis? And what does it mean that so much of the best American contemporary art has been collected by Europeans and is now slated to return (on long-term loan) from overseas? What economic forces cause such movements? And what is the relationship between American manufacturing's flight abroad and the takeover of vacated industrial spaces by artists and museums? Whatever MASS MOCA contributes, for better or worse, to the landscape of international art, one of its greatest services will surely be its having focused attention on these and other issues that fundamentally shape the nature of contemporary culture.

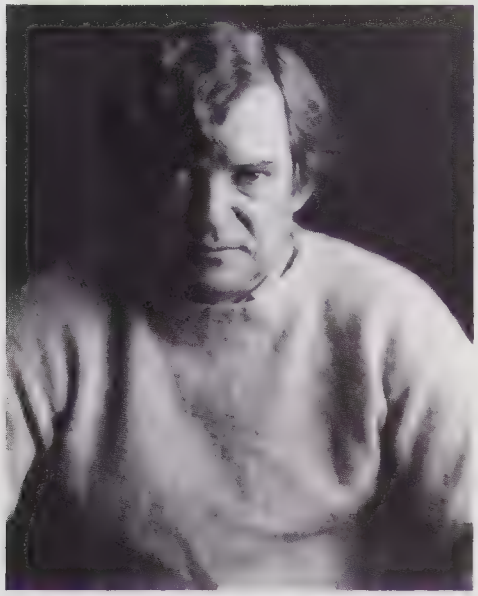
Most immediately, though, we'll be waiting with bated breath to see if Krens can make it work. Could he be the epic-scale museum director who would dare to do what everyone says can't be done? The one who shrugs off the conventional wisdoms, pieties and restraints, who shakes us up, outrages us and then delivers the impossible? Can he give us a museum unlike anything we've ever had in America, one as deep as it is wide, one that both boggles and challenges our minds? Can he and his team give us the mammoth spectacle—the Documenta, the Zeitgeist, the Westkunst? Will MASS MOCA become a real mecca of world culture? These, finally, will have to be the questions by which to measure the success or failure of Krens and MASS MOCA. □

1. Another angle on the question of what values MASS MOCA will stand for has been raised by the Massachusetts Council for the Arts and Humanities. Kim Comart, the council's Director of Government Relations, says his organization has been "very much in favor" of MASS MOCA, but is also "hopeful that as discussions evolve there will be serious consideration given to certain local public benefits. We hope that they're cognizant of the importance of serving the community and not just folks from New York and Europe." Comart says that the council has communicated to Krens as well as the state legislature a number of items they'd like to see made part of MASS MOCA programming. These include educational programs for schoolchildren, a space designed for educational purposes, gallery space for local artists, a slide library for local artists and guaranteed affirmative action. The council also wants the MASS MOCA commission to sponsor a competition to determine who will design the museum's architectural component so that local architects might get fair consideration. Asked about these requests, Krens said he was unaware of them and therefore not prepared to comment.

Author: *Ken Johnson is a free-lance critic and art historian.*

Presently installed at the Reina Sofía, Madrid, and ultimately destined for MASS MOCA: Dan Flavin's To Jan and Ron Greenberg, *1972.*

Critics and the Marketplace



Robert Hughes

I don't think the issue of money is involved in the creation of art—not, at least, in the creation of significant art. And I don't think the price of works of art adds to understanding them. But money is bound up with the present sociology of the art world, with the way people look at art and with what they expect from it. The art world, lagging behind, has echoed the Reagan period. It's not exactly a reprise of the extravagances of the Vanderbilt era—what has happened in the relations between culture and money in New York and the rest of America in the '80s is worse. It's like a gruesome *Totentanz.* But no, I don't see any sign of the imminent collapse of the whole art market. Indeed, I think it's most improbable. What you get is a great volatility of certain reputations, but as long as there are a few—not many—Titians, Tintorettos, van Goghs and so on for sale, and an increasingly ravenous tribe of collectors.... I mean, America has more than a million millionaires now. It's no distinction to be a millionaire. It's no distinction to collect. Soon it will be merely vulgar.

The above are condensed interviews conducted by Nancy Princenthal or Deborah Drier, and are initialed accordingly. In a few cases, the critics preferred to write their statements; these are uninitialed.

Is it this gross inflation of the market that accounts for the media interest? Sure. It's just raw social libido, which is combined in a very unhealthy way with the traditional American fantasy of art as therapy. Art has become a multizillion-dollar religion, and there are many Americans who find this stimulating. I think it's comic, you see. But then I'm not American.

There is only one artist that I know of who makes convincing work out of a critique of the relations between big money and art, and that's Hans Haacke. But though it's good strong stuff and I'm always interested in what he comes up with, I don't think that Haacke's work lives at a very high esthetic level. As for the others doing this kind of thing, Barbara Kruger is tedious, and whatever it is that Bickerton et al. are doing doesn't seem to me to have the smallest esthetic dimension or power of criticality. It's just very smug, and peripheral—adolescent sophistics. How many times do you need to have that kind of decayed conceptualism recycled? I think it's circular for an artist to make a big song and dance about the horrors of late capitalism, while staying on the payroll of Mary Boone or Ileana Sonnabend. It's like saying you don't like Mickey Mouse but you work at Disneyland.

In other words, I think there are two things going on here at the same time. First of all, the colossal rise in picture prices, the journalistic fixation on the market and the way in which the general public has had its nose rubbed in the notion of the glamour of the $8-million Manet or the $50-million van Gogh have done permanent and irreparable harm to museum experience. All that has been one continuous chamber of horrors. But at the same time, the idea that a critique can be effectively mounted from inside the art work for the edification of the very collectors who are engaged in all the mythologization seems to me to be silly. I don't know about finding stronger words for it—I don't think it's particularly deleterious or anything, but I think it's ineffective. All it does is titillate the philistines who like to think that avant-gardism includes a vision of the marketplace which supports their own activities.

I don't feel that this so-called "market frenzy" has affected my practice as a critic. Of course, I wouldn't have written *The SoHoiad* [Hughes's Popeian parody of the hype surrounding the Neo-Expressionists, which appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, Mar. 29, '84] without it, and yes, sure, I think it's a very interesting subject. But I've been in this game too long to imagine that you can turn our equivalent of the Dutch tulip mania around by simply writing about it. All you can do is try to clarify people's thinking on the matter, and you can only speak to a few people at a time—you can't turn around the horde of half-educated lemmings that they call collectors in this country. In any event the mechanisms of promotion in the last 10 or 15 years have become so transparent to anybody who knows about the media that it's impossible to assign a great deal of value to these processes. For the most part, the critics are writing from a set menu prepared by the museums which in turn is prepared for the museums by the market. It's depressing, but I don't know whether it's reversible.

Nor would I say that the market frenzy has altered my practice in terms of its obvious ethical responsibilities, which don't fundamentally change. As a critic, you stay out of social contact with the art world. You don't mix with dealers—a great relief. You don't collect, you don't involve yourself in that chain of mutual obligation which has always tended to sap the moral vitality of criticism. You don't have stables, à la Greenberg—you try not to play favorites in that way. You're not a promoter. You don't take freebies, because whereas in the old days it didn't matter so much, at today's prices, it does. The critic becomes more of a diagnostician and less of a John the Baptist.

But I do think that American criticism is gradually being dragged into some moderate state of sensitivity about these questions. I've always been amazed about the amount of conflict of interest here. I feel no sense of loss at being out of the commercial art world—it's pure gain to me as a writer. Who wants to clutter up his life with hustlers and bores? The wonderful thing is that the world is full of very interesting people who have nothing whatever to do with one's immediate career. As one's basic contact with literature

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is reading, so one's basic contact with art is looking, and looking is a one-person activity.

I don't mean in practice that you lead a monastic life in which you never meet an artist, talk to another critic or run into a dealer, but you can treat the art world with a certain amount of reserve. The excessive involution of the American art world, the fact that most critics are not writers but live in this literary sub-genre, and wouldn't be able to survive outside it by writing about anything else, naturally leads them to seek more and more the company of the art world, which just increases its self-referentiality. That's fine for them, but not for me. —*N.P.*

Gary Indiana

I went to the Sotheby's auction last week, and obviously people are paying incredible amounts of money for works of art. I have no way of knowing if the volume of things being bought and sold is vastly larger than it used to be, so I can't comment on whether there's a feeding frenzy going on. I'm not an economist. But I've read that in periods when there is a lot of monetary uncertainty, and apprehension about what other areas of the economy might do, wealthy people tend to buy gems, they tend to buy gold, and they tend to buy fine art. So conceivably what looks like a rush to buy art right now has to do with the market crash. Also, while art used to have high value but low liquidity, banks for the first time are now lending people money to buy it, and Sotheby's is advancing money to bidders. So it's a much more negotiable commodity.

But for all of the frenzy, there is also constriction. For the past year or two—and I think you'll see this more and more—the art world has been shrinking. It's not shrinking as dramatically as it did in the '70s, but I do think that for the next six or seven years it's going to be very hard for new artists to break into the market. We had a period in the early and middle '80s, around the time of Neo-Expressionism, when it was a free-for-all. New movements were being discovered every week, whole slews of new artists were getting in on them, lots and lots of newly rich Reaganite collectors were coming into the art world and snapping up anything they could get their hands on. And what's happening now is, I think, a much more selective sort of buying.

This is an election year, and nobody knows what's going to happen to the economy, so there's still a lot of speculative buying going on. And it's interesting that it's affecting contemporary art along with old and recent masters. That somebody will pay $190,000 for a 1988 Bleckner is a statement that they're sure it's going to keep its value no matter what happens in November, or in the next couple of years. But there's been a lot of weeding out of what isn't going to have a long run, and I think that people will probably stop buying art so aggressively. The art world will become both more spread out and a little smaller. There won't be so much emphasis on superstars, and things will be kind of stable for the next five, six, seven years. That's my prediction.

The ethics of criticism in relation to all this is a sprawling issue. The ethical guidelines and strictures at the *Village Voice* are almost draconian—you can't collect works of art, you have to declare them if you own them, and so on. I have no investment in art, nor do I really want to have. But as to the fact that anything that you write also serves as a kind of promotion of things—yes, I have a lot of difficulty with that. In fact, I'm leaving my post at the *Voice* fairly soon because I'm tired of playing that role, which I've found inescapable. (I'll be doing a different column in the *Voice* as of September.)

Naturally if you have any power at all as a critic, you feel that you can do some good in the world by bringing attention to certain things and not to others. The problem comes when you see that no matter how critical you are, what is really important is the fact that the picture is in the magazine or the newspaper. You know the magic of the word in mass media is simply that the name gets spelled right—your writing is going to be used as a commodity as much as the work of art is. I've tried all kinds of ways to booby trap that process: I've written pornographic columns where the last paragraph is a skimpy mention of a show I happened to like: I've tried humor, which isn't always even understood. And yet the review will still be put in plastic and laid on the gallery counter.

I've concluded that the only way to deal with what I don't think is good is to avoid it. And I'm not comfortable with that either because there's something illegitimate about that kind of decision. There's something about silencing other people, or making a silence where other people should be, that I'm very uncomfortable with. Yet it seems to be the only critical procedure that maybe complicates the whole issue of whether critical writing serves a straightforward promotional function. To put it on the basis of the inflation of the proper name, if the names of all competitors were included in any discourse then you might say that it was not simply promotional, or that everybody was being promoted at the same time.

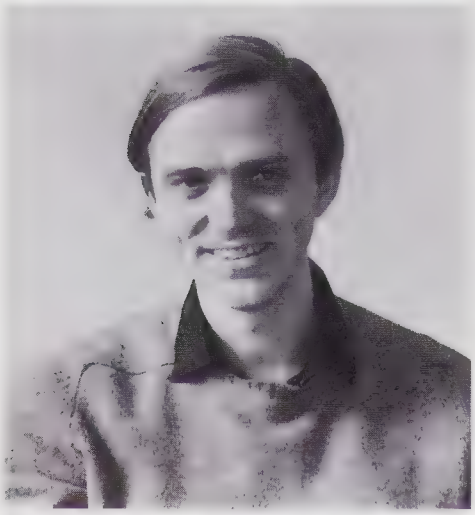
I do think that art as a form of market criticism is something new. And I think that certain people—Barbara Kruger, Hans Haacke, Ashley Bickerton, Haim Steinbach—have made work that very forcefully relinquishes the naive stance of earlier artists who were being taken up into a market, and whose work was being bought and sold, but who took the position that their activity and the whole meaning of their art was located outside of that process. These artists—and there are a lot more—have been very smart about what a work of art is, not only in terms of the menu of meanings that can be extracted directly from it, but also in terms of the context in which that work has its life or career. Barbara and Haim especially have drawn attention to the fact that everything is a commodity in this society. Hans is a bit more prudish about this; I think

In which ten critics voice strong opinions on such art/money issues as the new avarice, artomania, the art commodity, market frenzy, conflicts of interest, conspiracies and AIDS.

he's a bit more censorious about other artists than is absolutely necessary, or perhaps I should say he feels more appalled at the situation than I, for example, do.

I have to say that Barbara is probably the artist who has most changed my consciousness, and from whose work I have learned most about American society and culture. One thing that I really admire about her is her criticality, her ability to separate out a number of ideas that may be inherent in a particular statement or phenomenon; she doesn't make blanket condemnations of the market or the way everything gets taken up into the machinery of capital. Barbara is able to view events apart from her own emotional investment in their outcomes, a gift I wish more people had. But I would also say that Ashley and Haim and Hans, among many others, have expanded my consciousness about all kinds of things. All of these people have continually changed my thinking as a critic, or as an observer or a writer or whatever. I mean, I went into art criticism feeling very much like Savonarola, and I'm coming out feeling that things are basically OK in the art world, at least in the sense that artists are doing what they're supposed to.

—N.P.



Robert Storr

In 1964 Allan Kaprow published a signal article in *Art News* titled "Should the Artist Become a Man of the World?" that directly challenged the prevailing Abstract Expressionist myths regarding the persona and social position of the modern artist. In essence, Kaprow argued that the vanguard artist had ceased belonging to an esthetic and moral "world apart" and had entered into the social mainstream as a professional like any other. University educated and most likely middle class by birth, artists could no longer claim to be the helpless victims of an inattentive and habitually abusive public, but were instead obliged to accept that they were the highly trained architects of their own fate within a context increasingly responsive to their needs. As regards money Kaprow said, "The best avant-garde artists today are famous, usually prolific, financially comfortable. Those who are not yet can be. Those few who will not be must agree that they have rejected the opportunity out of a preference for the tradition of artistic martyrdom or out of a fear of temptation."

Repudiating 10th Street ideology, Kaprow's essay was a manifesto for his generation. It was also a prediction, but one as much based on old demographics as upon the liberal optimism of the Kennedy era. In 1964 the art world was still a relatively small community. What Kaprow didn't count on was the lemminglike rush to enjoy the prosperity he assumed had arrived for good and all. It hadn't, and hasn't, or if it did, for a great many artists it is now on the wane. Not, certainly, that the art "middle class" will suddenly disappear, but rather that a place in it can no longer to be taken for granted, if it ever could be. In recent years, among artists as in the society generally, there has been a dramatic, not to say grotesque, concentration of wealth and an ever widening gap between those at the very top of the hierarchy and those at the next levels down. Meanwhile, the cost of living in the various art centers—New York, L.A., Chicago—has steadily risen. Cheap lofts are a thing of the past. Further, competition for employment in the marginal economy and most especially in teaching has become increasingly fierce and has kept pay scales low for most people involved. And, despite the burgeoning gallery scene, even in a city as large as New York, the choices for any single artist usually boil down to one or two, and these, like college art departments, are already overcrowded. Naturally, it doesn't help any to be over 40, a woman or non-white.

However tonic at the time, in retrospect Kaprow's description of the new vanguard artist who "did his job" and could in return expect reasonable security—gallery affiliations, tenured teaching positions and so forth—now seems utopian. The present reality for the majority of artists is quite different. For a great many who are well past the "romantic" hardships of their apprentice years, and often with substantial public records behind them, the practical economy of the art world in the 1980s consists of sheetrocking, paste-up and/or a nomadic existence teaching as a one-term "visiting artist" far from their own studios and cut off from their own community. In this context, a new Social Darwinist version of Kaprow's retort to the old avant-garde has emerged. Minus Kaprow's good humor and foil of Bohemian sanctimoniousness, it says: "The money's there, take it. If you don't, you're a sap. If you *can't*, you're a mediocrity." Such attitudes have in turn engendered a renewed puritanism and iconoclasm—and a new double standard. For critics safely ensconced in editorial positions or universities or expecting to be so, and for artists similarly protected, selling art is often viewed as suspect and object-making a fetishistic if not fascistic enterprise. When one is on salary, busy ministering to the "Culture" and solemnly analyzing its discontents, it is easy to forget that the market—a few sales out of intermittent one-person shows and the endless "casting call" of group exhibitions—is the only source of income other than occasional grants that can put one ahead of the grinding routine of temporary support jobs.

Meanwhile, whole careers have been built on selling the pretense of "resistance" to the market. For every Hans Haacke—who has exposed and challenged art-world mechanisms with rare intelligence and some real effect—there are hosts of "post-political" artists and their apologists busily playing both ends against the middle. This is no surprise, of course. The 1970s taught us that there are many ways to collect art that seeks to defy conventional esthetic "thingness." If we needed further proof, the lesson of late capitalism in the 1980s is that professional investors are always better at inventing new instruments for speculation than artists (or the S.E.C.) are at taking them out of circulation. After all, they do it full time. Among artists, even the most dedicated spoilers are amateurs by comparison to the Wall Street and Madison Avenue pros—though many of the former are more or less acknowledged fans of the latter.

Ultimately, Warhol notwithstanding, money is not a compelling reason for making art, and the horrid fascination the 1980s have had with it is wearing pretty thin. I'm bored by discussions of who has a lot—and not everybody who does makes the best-dressed list, behaves badly at restaurants or otherwise parades or misuses it—and less and less patient with work that professes to deconstruct the "semiotics" of cash while raking in the real thing. I am more concerned about who has "enough," which means enough so that they don't have to think about it all the time. But then most artists, like most other people, never succeed in doing that, and for artists to suppose that the world owes them a living is not only unrealistic but reactionary. All told, finally, things are neither so bad, nor so good. "Angst" these days is not a question of penury but of being perpetually in hock to Visa and MasterCard. (That's an improvement over the past, by the way—as are cash machines with overdraft protection. Bankers' perceptions that artists make money means we can get credit even when we don't actually "deserve" it.) Thus, to accept Kaprow's premise but update his argu-

"Art has captured the public imagination in a new, fetishized way. Sums of money are highly libidinous—saying this painting cost $2 million is somehow saying something profoundly erotic."—Robert Pincus-Witten

"It is because the idea of art has become so porous that the temple can be taken over by the moneylenders, indeed, beg the moneylenders to take it over."—Donald B. Kuspit

ment: for many artists both widely recognized and comparatively unknown, membership in the art world middle class in the 1980s means being about as happy as the average guy in Friday traffic who wonders about the new imports that pass him by while listening to John De Lorean sing the Lord's praises on the radio news.

—*N.P.*

Lisa Liebmann

The art that effectively challenged financial structures or money or whatever is not at all the art of the present—it was the art of the '70s. A lot of art in the late '60s and '70s—performance, the radical end of Minimalism, all that—*did* effectively criticize money as a central governing force in the art world. But, obviously, it was defeated by the need to buy and spend as well as by a longing for color and splendor. I can hardly think of any art being made now, including art that claims the critique of money as its central subject, that is as effective, as profoundly anti-object. For instance, Hans Haacke's work is certainly conscience-provoking, but most of it is in fact elegant in appearance and easily portable and installable, and I'm surprised that it hasn't yet really made its presence felt at auction. I mean, Haacke's work, like Barbara Kruger's, is attractively, slickly produced. And any slickly produced, attractive thing can find a home. Many hands that feed have traditionally *liked* to be bitten.

And the critical attention focused on that kind of work *has* increased its value, by reinforcing its topicality and so forth. By saying this, I don't mean to be clipping any protesting wings—it just seems to be a pretty clear-cut situation. I think that the most subversive artists at this point are those who have continued over the last several years to be faithful to whatever vision they've had without latching on to some surefire stylistic airplane, or hurling geometric shapes on canvases where there had been none before. Sticking to your guns is a form of subversion, whatever the overt or implicit content of your work may be. This includes completely non-political, gestural art with a literary bent, as well as work with some implied narrative or political content. In fact, these are categories that I don't make enormous distinctions between. One can find political meaning in certain forms of visual bravura, and esthetic value in the maneuvers of guerrillas or moles. And very often the artist can't dictate what one's response to work on those levels will be. I don't want to contradict Haacke, but I think to call his work "formalist" is completely lucid.

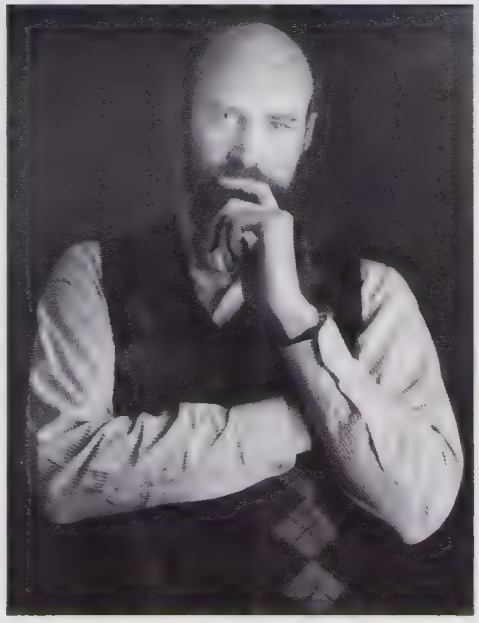
The role of criticism or journalism in promoting market success, or in focusing attention on it, is less important for visual art than it is elsewhere. Though it may have a strange kind of cumulative, rolling-stone-gathering-moss dynamic, if you compare art criticism to film criticism, or theater criticism, or whatever, its promotional effect is actually fairly weak. You see, I think that art criticism is a form whose existence is not completely contingent on the shelf life of objects. So it's a kind of literature, yes. There's not been enough criticism lately that really takes art on, in an intense and descriptive and colorful and combative way. I also think that criticism is a form of its own whose sole function isn't to praise—or find fault with—art as it's being made.

Most allegedly theoretical criticism of the last few years, particularly in America, has been pointless, and has permitted market forces to start whooshing around. It doesn't exist in a 360-degree arena—it tackles one type of issue, or one chimeric sort of notion, wearing very fashionable French blinders. And therefore lets fools rush in. Paradoxically, *Art in America* and *Artforum* and all the better art magazines have to varying degrees served as springboards for a theoretical criticism that has basically been an advocacy criticism for one general style of verbal and graphic art not based on the visual. The result is that world structures are criticized, and whatever art strikes a correct posture gets automatically slogged to the market.

And much is ignored. I think that American painting of an idiosyncratic nature has been fairly well ignored in the last few years. I'd rather address this question by writing specific articles about specific artists (if specific editors can be convinced), but I do think a certain kind of indigenous, expressive, gestural poetic painting, figurative as well as abstract, is alive and well but has gotten short shrift. I like Bickerton's work, and Koons's—most of it doesn't seem to be particularly self-righteous in attitude, which, as I remember, was getting to be quite a problem 10 years ago, when the flamboyance of some seemed to bring out the fascism in others. And I do think one can view, say, Koons's vacuum cleaners as related to Judd's shelving units. In fact, I feel encouraged to see the joke, and go formal.

I don't see art and artists as the enemy, but I sometimes feel quite alienated from the stuff that goes on around them. I have very little urge to pick up a pen and write about that, however. I frankly don't have the patience to research it. I'm not interested enough in it, and I don't really think that it would make any difference. If there was some horrendous or funny thing that I learned of, I might try to do something like spill the beans. I'm sure conspiracies abound. I'm just sure that there are lots of plots and plans to get things going in certain directions. A few rich friends are all you need. Over the last couple of years, it seems that of the handful of artists who have gotten a lot of attention, everybody, successively, has had their year when something crazy happened at auction. It's like queen for a day. And then things readjust, they tend to sort themselves out. Most of the people busy working on all these things are simply too boring for words—and, by and large, I need words to keep doing what I do.

—*N.P.*



Douglas Crimp

Although there are any number of issues that the question of art and money raises for me, it is their relation to the AIDS crisis that is most

"You don't involve yourself in that chain of mutual obligation which has always sapped the moral integrity of criticism. I've always been amazed at the amount of conflict of interest here."—Robert Hughes

immediate and at the same time symbolic of the whole question of the historical relationship between the two. The art world is concerned about AIDS, but the nature of its response shows the fundamental limitations of the ways it is able to think about art and the social.

Last summer's "Art Against AIDS" auction would seem to represent the art world's central notion of what it can do to respond to the AIDS crisis. And, in fact, the event did attract artists and collectors and dealers and viewers from all parts of the political spectrum—from those who are immediately and directly concerned with the epidemic to those for whom it remains a fairly abstract problem. I should say right off that I don't have any objections to this whatsoever. Insofar as we have been drastically failed by the people who should be funding AIDS research, AIDS treatment, AIDS services and so on—we've been totally failed by the government—we in the art world have to exploit the commodity aspect of art. I would never say to anyone, don't give your art work to an auction to raise money for AIDS research.

The problem here is the passivity of the institutionalized art world. They say, "OK, we'll give a painting, or a drawing, or whatever, and it will help raise money." But few artists, critics or dealers have taken the trouble to find out, say by consulting someone in the AIDS movement, who should be the beneficiary of this $30 check or that $10,000 painting. This coincides with the notion that you can let other people do the struggling for you, and that you can pay for the struggle without becoming really involved in it, or understanding it.

This brings up the related question of whether cultural producers of any kind could imagine a way of entering into the AIDS struggle that isn't passive. Could they take an activist position? From the art world's point of view, the act of selling art—or of producing art as a commodity which can then be sold to raise money for AIDS research—seems to preclude the possibility of activist art, engaged art, or the idea that art—and those involved with it—can actually *do* something to effect or change people's behavior.

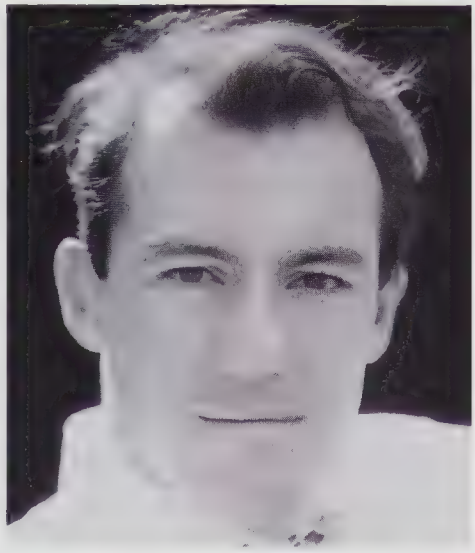
Let me read this quote from Robert Rosenblum's essay in the "Art Against AIDS" catalogue, to let you know what I mean. He says, "By now, in the 1980s, we are all disenchanted enough to know that no work of art, however much it may fortify the spirit or nourish the eye and mind, has the slightest power to save a life. Only science can do that. But we also know that art does not exist in an ivory tower, that it is made and valued by human beings who live and die, and that it can generate a passionate abundance of solidarity, love, intelligence, and most important, money. That is how, in our small and frightened [art] world, we are confronting the shadow and substance of death."

First of all, the idea that only science can save a life is so fraught with ideological nonsense that I'd rather not talk about it. What I do want to point out is the contradiction between the notion of art as a commodity and the idea that art has no relation to the social. Don't commodities involve social relations? If we assert that art has no power to save lives we render ourselves powerless. The power we have to save lives—artists and critics both—is education: getting the word out about what safe sex is, the routes of transmission of the virus, etc. My position is that art does indeed have the power to enter into that aspect of the social and to save lives. In fact, art *is* doing just that: there are groups of artists involved in the struggle against AIDS who are making work (street posters, videos and the like) that is successfully educating people about AIDS. And critics, too: critics should be thinking about the issues, looking at art that supports the issues and making it publicly known.

What groups like Gran Fury, which recently did a series of posters for the nine days of AIDS actions in New York, and Testing the Limits, the collective that made the video documentary about AIDS activism, have in common is an idea of art as instrumental, and this flies in the face of all the idealism of esthetic discourse. That's why I think people in the art world have difficulty in accepting such a notion. They can't see that anything that is so direct, so informative, so empowering, so mobilizing could actually be real "art." Much of the rhetoric about AIDS in the art world perpetuates the myth that the community is full of faggots; contributions of money or art works to AIDS research are therefore important because AIDS is affecting this sector more than it is affecting others. First of all, that's homophobic, but in addition it reflects a failure to recognize the contours of this epidemic in New York City. The majority of people getting AIDS in New York are neither gay nor in the art world; the majority are black and hispanic IV drug users and their sex partners and children. In Newark, which is just 10 minutes from New York, 1 in 20 babies is born AIDS positive. That's the real AIDS situation.

The trouble with efforts like "Art Against AIDS" is that they imply that we're participating simply because of our own. What we've got to realize is this: AIDS can only be thought of in relation to a larger social context. Unfortunately, the art world fails to take this into account. To this day, critical practice in the art world is mostly thought of in relation to art-world institutions, pure and simple. To rethink that relation in terms of a specific social crisis or a condition that is external to the art world is very difficult for most of us.

Obviously, many artists and critics will be unable to reconsider their cultural work in activist terms. But that shouldn't stop them from becoming informed. And the institutionalized art world must begin to realize that art can be something other than a commodity. For me, one of the most disturbing things about the notion of art as commodity and therefore useful for fundraising is the implication that you don't have to do anything else. —*D.D.*



Paul Taylor

I don't really know anything about money. Where I come from, money and art don't mix. I don't read the business section of the newspaper, and I don't think I ever paid attention to *Manhattan, Inc.* In America, I first sniffed out that artists were making money when—well, actually, they told me so themselves. They seemed to be forever talking about their holiday houses, their assistants, the homes of their collectors. Until then, I had never given money a thought.

Of course, it takes a lot of it to live in New York. Art critics certainly don't make any. But my artist friends were making loads of it. They would tell me that, when they first came to New York and had to support themselves by writing reviews for art magazines, they were paid miserably. Once again, it was the artists who were always talking about money.

Then I stopped reading the art magazines and started reading the glossies. After all, these are what the artists were reading, too. They were all writing about how much money the artists were making. When they liked an artist, like Jennifer Bartlett, they said what a financial success she was—as if that meant something. When they didn't like somebody, like Keith Haring or Julian Schnabel, they said what financial successes they were—again, as if it meant something. This

was art criticism, '80s-style.

After a while, nobody was discussing much at all—except for money. It was like there were no issues left in art. The passage of the art work, ready-made, through the world has become more important. Meaning in art now seems to reside in its destiny and not its creation. (Isn't that Barthes?) As the critics of Minimal art used to say, art's content in the future will be located outside the work. And what better way to measure this than with society's yardstick?

I still know nothing about money. But now I know how to judge a good painting. Either that, or I'm mixing with the wrong crowd.

Donald B. Kuspit

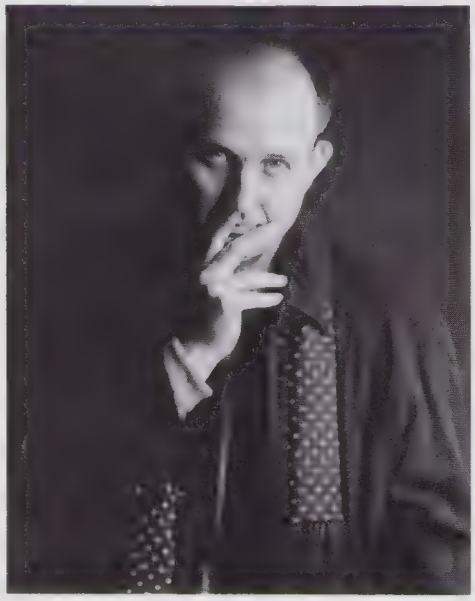
Everywhere one sees signs of the increasing importance of art as an investment property. It has clearly reached unexpected heights of economic hyperbole. According to the Consumers Digest Investment Index, $10,000 invested in "modern paintings" on February 1, 1987 was worth $15,449 one year later. This was the best return of ten investment risks. The distant second best was Japanese stocks ($12,930). Diamonds ($10,814; seventh best) are clearly no longer a girl's best friend—art is. The problem is, what art? That's the rub, as the playwright said.

I want to examine the effect of the new avarice for art on our perception of it. It has infected artists as well as spectators. I recall one prominent artist who thought of himself as a "landlord," bringing to mind a particularly money-mad character in Balzac. Increasingly, all we may remember of an art work is its price. At least that often seems the best foot it has to put forward. To say that this is disillusioning and demoralizing, or to condemn it out of hand, is beside the point. It is as much of a capitalist phenomenon as the tulip bulb craze in the 16th-century Netherlands. The question is, why is it occurring now? Tulips at least produce pretty flowers. Can the same be said for the art on which all that money is riding?

The sociologist Max Weber noted money's function as a measure of acquisitive success and as a symbol of prestige. It is also a "common denominator" permitting the comparison of heterogeneous goods and services. Art these days may be the ultimate symbol of social prestige, the ultimate property by which success measures itself. Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption springs to mind—with a twist—for art is conspicuously different, and so signals a different kind of success. Let's call it "spiritual" success. After material success, the rich want spiritual success, the ultimate satisfaction of vanity. (Perhaps out of a nagging fear that their material success, and the social prestige it brings with it, go only so far in giving one a sense of personal worth.) What easier way to be spiritual—to overcome that jaded feeling—than to own, even hoard, art? Paradoxically, the acquisitive instinct saves itself in acquiring art. (Hoarding, as we know, is a regressive activity, and art collecting can be regarded as a superior regression.)

But the point is that instead of money being transfigured (laundered?) by art, art becomes transfigured by money. It loses its substance as art (whatever that might be); and it is just because the idea of art in the 20th century has become so porous that money can invade its sacred premises, that the temple can be taken over by the moneylenders, indeed, beg the moneylenders to take it over. For art no longer knows what it means to be self-supporting. It is no longer transparently clear what is artistically significant—artistic values seem wildly relative—which is why art seems to lend itself to speculative economic significance. For the market is always changing, depending on rumor and contagion as much as on supply and demand. The transmutation of art into gold, with which this century is ending, seems to complete an ironically reductive, alchemical process initiated earlier in the century by art itself. Thus, the magic of art and of money mix, in a heady brew.

The economic evaluation of art raises another issue, as Weber suggested: what kind of good and service is art? It is now explicitly comparable to other goods and services, because of its extraordinary economic viability. The esoteric spiritual value of art has been yea-sayed ad nauseum, and all kinds of intellectual accolades have been showered on it. The exchange value of art calls all such notions on the carpet, for they are shame-faced and callow, ignorant of the hard economic reality of art. Tough-minded money tells art to put up or shut up. In self-defense, art can arrogantly say that it costs a lot. This makes it profoundly meaningful, and matter-of-fact. In an eloquent tautology, art's monetary value has become its sublime value. Art and money have exchanged roles: money becomes "divine" by being "translated" into art; art becomes commonplace by being translated into money. But that's enough to give art the only clear and absolute meaning—a meaning as universal and substantial as money—it's going to get in this farcical world.



Robert Pincus-Witten

A critique of the market, or of the relationship between the market and art, is, after all, in many respects what art now is. So I would say that the deconstructive or postmodern mode is the style of the moment. I don't want to use words like "reified," but it certainly is true that the processes of contemporary art have become involved with university studies and its discourse sounds collegiate. But that doesn't mean that deconstructive or postmodern forms aren't significant. And there is also the force of history behind them, which makes it seem that we got here through an inevitable sequence. It's not a question of "Do I like it?" or "Don't I like it?" To the degree that I'm somehow responsible for clarifying what this evolutionary force is, I accept what it leads to. Within that framework, I'll simply say that I'm allowed the conventional choices of liking certain artists more, and certain artists less, and others not at all.

Of course the term "style" has been brought

"In terms of a critic's ethics, I'm convinced that the United States is absolutely the most moral and puritanical—I think the Europeans would say childish."—Peter Schjeldahl

into question as a retrograde notion. I admit that style is the bourgeois word for history. But after all, one of the paradoxes of the present mode is that it makes us aware that while the art may criticize the perquisites of the bourgeoisie, it is the bourgeoisie itself which is enforcing this historical drumroll. Without that class, you wouldn't have stylistic sequence. What I'm trying to get at is that I don't see this moment as appreciably different from any other in modernist art history even though it bears the brave name of postmodernism. My position is that postmodernism, which was going to end all of the conventions attaching to modernism, is in fact the next turn of the wheel of modernism: postmodernism is our modernist style.

Still, it is apparent that, at present, there is a broad interest in the functionings of the contemporary art world. The artist, to name but one figure within the entire constellation of exchanges, functions in many cases in a media capacity; thus, he or she now possesses a significance to people who conventionally never entered avant-garde discourse. I'm talking about artists who appear in the general-interest magazines, discussed in terms of what they're wearing or what their houses look like. It is just as dismaying to know that in the competition of the auction room, which is a very important place, an interchange of considerable sums, hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, is occurring.

These sums are, of course, striking, but their unusualness is easily assimilated. If a town house on Sutton Place costs $10 million, why shouldn't a Mondrian cost at least as much? If a loaf of bread costs $2.39, why shouldn't a David Salle, say, cost at least $200,000? You see what I'm trying to get at.

It's true, art has captured the public imagination in a new, fetishized way. Sums of money are highly libidinous—saying something like $2 million is somehow saying something profoundly erotic. And if these issues are being addressed, it's within an unwritten Marxist agenda. On one hand, the agenda must be Marxist, since the classical language of economic analysis comes from Marx. But if the analysis is in fact a cryptic apology for an old-guard Marxist demonstration of the profligacy of the middle class, then I'm very dubious of that analysis. And if the unwritten agenda is a mythologizing of some kind of utopian socialist fantasy, then there are a lot of crossed wires insofar as I've yet to see great art come from a wholly socialist context—or rather a wholly collectivist mentality—with the exception of early Soviet art. And that was suppressed by the very regime it assisted in bringing into being. Its condition as art emerged with bourgeois acquisition at a much later date. Admittedly, this acquisition estheticized and formalized what originally were revolutionary signifiers. But that it has remained vital means that this work was susceptible to recoding. The real power of the middle class is its genius for recoding and its ability to accept as art a critique of its own perquisites.

That cannot be said of the aristocracy, nor of the proletariat, if there is such a thing as a proletariat—and I don't think there is though there are broad reaches of the disenfranchised and their disenfranchisement is, in fact, directly related to the assumed perquisites of the middle class. Nor do I think the aristocracy exists as anything more than an ornamental excrescence. It never had much meaning here, and it doesn't have any meaning in Europe, except to secure a table at a smart restaurant. It has meaning as a historical term, but it's not a living class. The middle class is a living class; it is the class coterminous with modernism.

Has my sense of my responsibilities as a critic changed in relationship to the new consumerism? Not really. My sense of those responsibilities changed long ago when I came to feel that all I could do was to articulate what the new issues are, and to express them in a highly edited, diaristic form. I'm trying to record something of the vitality of art from a privileged vantage point on the lip of the teacup in which that tempest is occurring. —*N.P.*

Joe Masheck

As a rule, I deliberately avoid commenting on "issues" instead of art. But the power of money under Reagan has caused such a warping of values that, having been asked, I just can't resist. Money and art: reading the sociology of Georg Simmel I've begun to think about money as an "abstraction," and a markedly urban one, especially in relation to the foundational modernity of form in Post-Impressionist and then Cubist art. Treating the "negative trait of lack of character" in money culture, Simmel actually observed a "colorlessness [that] becomes, as it were, the color of work activity at the high points of money transactions," which, he notes, "liberal . . . intellectualism" also resembles. In the brokerized art world in which we function today—even if, willing to be taken for holy fools, we knowingly avoid enthusiasm—Simmel's insights reverberate once more.

Next slide, please. Bored with pseudoscientific explications of the "fourth dimension"? How about this, from the world of economics, in analogy to the objectification of the formal construct in Cubism: "It is the essence of a model that one does *not* fill in real values for the variable functions. To do so would make it useless as a model. For as soon as this is done the model loses its generality and its value as a mode of thought." These are the words of Maynard Keynes himself, who happens also to have written (not very good) exhibition catalogue essays.

Moving along, recently I read an article reprinted, with enthusiasm and no doubt government support, from *U.S. News and World Report* by a regional arts organization. The very title referred to corporations as latter-day "Medicis" (sic). This notion, common enough I know, grossly implies that tyrannical, *condottiere* mores are appropriate to a liberal democracy. All that tax money pork-barreled into draggy R-and-R for executives who have the nerve to nominate themselves selfless cultural patrons to posterity. Just as bad, the generation now in college has already accepted the restoration of "culture" as a special indulgence, that is, an exclusive prerogative of those born to wealth—plus the few wives not obliged to do "real" work.

Equally blameworthy, thanks to their complicity as pimps for investors, are the critics I like to call "Millionaire Marxists." I do marvel at how smoothly they manage to mesh interests among themselves despite, one would have thought, heartrending ideological differences and practically fratricidal power plays. Partly it's that even in the big radical-theory business, money prefers to talk to money.

Meanwhile, the courts have seemed pleased to back up the Reaganesque privatization of chartered museums as well as colleges, even in this state where the Napoleonic Regents system ought to protect higher values than self-aggrandizement underwritten by "creative" corporate "self-support." Then again, art's just a quiet, effete, harmless, irrelevant upper-class game of trivial importance to normal people, right? Put that way, who will even admit to giving a damn?

"You know the magic of the word in the mass media is simply that the name gets spelled right—your writing is going to be used as a commodity as much as the work of art is."—Gary Indiana

"Art criticism is a form whose existence is not completely contingent on the shelf life of objects. Though it may have a rolling-stone-gathering-moss dynamic, its promotional effect is actually fairly weak."—Lisa Liebmann

Peter Schjeldahl

In general, I feel that people are incredibly squeamish about money in a way that doesn't make much sense to me. We live in a society and culture mediated by money. And when you look at societies and cultures that are not mediated by money, it becomes clear that money has things to recommend it. The kind of denial that we seem to be affected by in terms of money is something I don't really understand, but I have thought a little about why it should be so pronounced in the visual arts. You just don't get this kind of excruciation in literature, movies, music or theater, where the financial realities of the field tend to be regarded in a more matter-of-fact way.

True, the stakes are higher in those fields, but it's only fairly recently that visual art has become major in sheer money terms, and that's obviously why we're talking about it. It's forced our hand. In the past there's been very little money, relatively, in contemporary visual art. And now here it is. So I think part of the rancor has to do with pure future shock, and a kind of conservative tendency to want things to be the way they were. Everybody is always nostalgic about something, and at times of rapid change that gets kind of screechy. In fact, the good old days were not good for artists, and the idea that an artist should make as much as a doctor or a lawyer is, to me, not scandalous.

If a critic would get up there too that would be wonderful, though it's true that even critics are paid marginally better than they used to be. And as a critic you do have to confront your place in the market. That is, you're not asked to write something, say, a gallery catalogue, to raise the spiritual level of the race. And I have no difficulty in writing gallery catalogues—that's probably a key question. My ethical rules of thumb include mainly having it be clear in whatever publication my writing appears who paid for it. With a gallery catalogue it's plain. Where it gets dicey—which incidentally is the rule in Europe—is for a magazine to publish a text that was commissioned by a gallery. In fact, in terms of a critic's ethics, I'm convinced that the United States is absolutely the most moral and Puritanical—I think the Europeans would say childish.

The other sore point is relations with collectors. And my rule in that is absolutely never would I take a nickel for advising a collector. Advisor/curator to a collector is a perfectly honorable role, but I think that it pretty much disqualifies you as a critic. Your ethical pact as a critic is with your readers, and they have to trust that what they're reading is your honest opinion, that there's no secret agenda involved in it.

My sensitivity to questions of the market has come into sharper focus as the pressure there rises, and I think that's good. The ethics of a situation in which nobody is making a dime are pretty easy. My usual comparison is with poetry. In poetry, everyone is pure, because nobody reads it, it has no historical energy or focus, and it's stupefyingly boring. There is no audience for poetry, except other poets, so there is no market for the commodity that is a poem, or almost none. And there is in fact a very lively market for the commodity that is art. And a corresponding interest in art criticism, pressure on art criticism, anxiety in art criticism. But the pressure I think works toward quality—art criticism has never been better, or more various.

But to get back to art—art follows money. It always has. It has to be acknowledged that the dynamic money in whatever society, whether it's the pharaoh's, or the Medici's, or the Saatchis', focuses the artistic tasks of the culture. I've been reading Svetlana Alpers's book on Rembrandt, which is, I think, very interesting. And I'm seeing what a wonderful influence the market invented by the bourgeoisie was in its infancy. Alpers has a point about Rembrandt being one of the first to have a real awareness of his work as a commodity, and in a way that is actually part of its profundity. We are still in Rembrandt's situation. The bourgeois market is still with us, and the idea that artists at any time since then have for any length of time or in any profound way been outside that situation is, I think, an illusion.

What happens with the arrival of Rembrandt is the appearance of superfluous glory. That is, before him, in other systems of patronage—certainly with popes and kings, and even to this day with state socialist patronage—the glory of the art reflected on the patron. But when you've just got a simple merchant buying a picture of a gentleman, or a landscape, he is buying a glory that is not reflecting on him. It reflects on the artist and on art itself and on other values involved in the art matrix. It's portable, excess glory. With Rembrandt or Jasper Johns or whomever, money value does not drive out other values. There is this tendency to see money as hostile to other immanent values, and that's just not the case.

Of course, art can do whatever it wants to, but it's hard for me at this point to imagine an art object that I would think of as important that wasn't comfortable with an awareness of itself as a commodity. Or if uncomfortable, didn't take some cognizance of it.

There certainly have been periods when artists were doing very good work and weren't making money, but I think that's the exception. It's got to be OK for a good artist to make a lot of money, even for a bad artist to make a lot of money. It would bother us less if the market were less effective, less sophisticated than it is. Although a lot of crummy artists make money for a while, in general the market's choices for the '80s have made sense. There are more bad artists making money than there are good artists not making money—let's put it that way. On the other hand, there are all kinds of uses for art, and all kinds of audiences for art, and there are audiences without money. But poverty does not make anybody a better artist. Poverty can in fact wipe somebody out.

One point I want to make, which I make frequently, is that visual art is unique in relation to all the other arts, in that it is an affair of handmade, one-of-a-kind commodities. Every other art by comparison has a mass consumership, whereas in real economic terms an art work is consumed only by one person, the person who buys it. That leaves all of the rest of us in the role of kibitzers. And it makes art extremely archaic. That's why we like it—painting is the one art that cannot be rationalized. Indeed it is the one medium that resists the media.

Of course, since Andy Warhol there have been repeated moves toward collaborating with the media, but they have always tended to fall back on themselves. Warhol's work is in any event such a good joke: here he was, in a loft—the Factory—with tin foil on the walls, slopping out paintings in this very messy, difficult silkscreen technique, and thinking about the mass media. In relation to de Kooning, yes, it looks like *Life* magazine. But in relation to *Life* magazine, the difference between it and de Kooning is an inch. I think that's the parodistic element in Warhol, which is very subtle, and very upbeat. He ends up aggrandizing painting. There's just no way of making more than one painting at a time. Sure, painting is one medium among many, but I think it's the one we're talking about. It's the one that all the money is going for, if we're talking about money. —*N.P.*

For the record, of the six women asked to contribute to this section, five declined.—*Eds.*

Joseph Beuys: FLIGHT, 1963, felt, grand piano, blackboard and thermometer, 122 by 350 by 713 inches. Courtesy Anthony d'Offay Gallery.

Right, Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys at the Hans Mayer Gallery, Düsseldorf.

Beuys and Warhol: Aftershocks

A double show in West Germany, multiple Beuys exhibitions and a brouhaha about legacies—the posthumous adventures of two artists whose concerns were closer than at first seems likely.

BY DAVID GALLOWAY

Discreetly, without catalogue, fanfare, invitations or special events, the Darmstadt Landesmuseum opened its recent exhibition "Beuys and Warhol." Intended as a modest presentation of familiar works by these two artists, the exhibition was meant to be a rather low-key affair. But by 10:00 a.m. on the morning of Friday, February 29, so many viewers had jammed the upstairs rooms of the museum that director Wolfgang Beeh was compelled to make an official greeting after all—to "open" the show rather than let it simply begin. Ironically, the atmosphere of the occasion created precisely the kind of "non-event" that Warhol himself had so ingeniously cultivated in the 1960s. For in fact, what was there to open? The Beuys works had occupied these same rooms without interruption for the past 18 years. And the eight Warhol canvases—including such classics as *Green Disaster* (1963), *Campbell's Beef Noodle Soup* (1962) and *Tango* (1962)—had all hung in these galleries before as part of the great Ströher collection. But now the works had new meaning. The event was not merely the mid-winter reunion of two former friends. It was the climax of a cause célèbre that for months had obsessed West German journalists.

From Beuys's Eurasia, 32nd movement of the Siberian Symphony 1963, *1966, blackboard, chalk, poles, oil paint, dead hare, cord, felt, fat.*

The current Beuys scandal involves charges of market manipulation and disputes over dating. It is fueled by the phenomenal increases in prices for his work since his death.

Controversy was triggered last fall by the announcement that numerous elements from Darmstadt's famous Beuys installation—the so-called Darmstadt Block—would be lent to a major Beuys retrospective being planned for the Martin Gropius-Bau in Berlin [Feb. 20–May 1]. Beuys's champions, including his widow, immediately objected, insisting that the thousands of individual elements of the Block, densely and carefully arranged by Beuys himself, should not be moved under any circumstances—even for temporary loan. The most intimate and intricate of all Beuys's installations, the Darmstadt Block had been assembled over many years, beginning in 1968 and continuing until Beuys's death in 1986. Nurturing this project like a private museum, Beuys had made repeated visits to Darmstadt, carefully recomposing drawings, objects, "relics" from happenings and fragments of earlier installations. Repeatedly he had expressed his wish that the components be seen together and remain together.

Just before Christmas, Kaspar König, now professor at the Städl School in Frankfurt, called a press conference to "save the Darmstadt Block." Encouraged by the artist's widow, Eva Beuys, more than 150 critics, curators, artists and friends rallied to the occasion. Public sentiment (fueled by nightly reports on the television news) favored maintaining the Darmstadt Block in situ, but public scrutiny also began to unravel the mysteries surrounding the owners of the installation: the covert "Circle of Friends," who had acquired the works in 1980 and had offered them as a ten-year "loan" to the very museum where they had resided since 1970.

The story goes back 20 years. In 1968, cosmetics tycoon Karl Ströher signed a contract with Beuys to acquire his entire artistic production. This unusual agreement gave Beuys DM400,000 (ca. $250,000) for all of his works that he then owned, plus first refusal on all future works which Ströher could acquire for the cost of the materials. Beuys remained satisfied with this arrangement, and Ströher never seems to have taken unfair advantage of the contract. Ströher never sold works he acquired from Beuys, but continued to add to the Block he had formed until his own death in 1977. In 1970, he lent his entire Beuys collection, together with his superb Pop art holdings, to the Darmstadt Landesmuseum. Ströher's gift of this collection to the Landesmuseum was never in doubt, but was conditional upon the museum building a new wing to house the proposed legacy. By the time of Ströher's death, however, this stipulation had still not been met, and the disposition of the blue-chip collection was cast into uncertainty. Ströher's heirs subsequently offered the collection to the city for an undisclosed sum that all observers agreed was "an eminently fair price." But the cultural bureaucrats of Darmstadt showed little interest in making the acquisition. As a result, in 1981 most of the works in the Ströher Collection—except for the Darmstadt Block—were sold to Frankfurt, where they will form the nucleus of a new Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by Hans Hollein and scheduled to open in 1990.

At the same time, with Beuys's knowledge and consent, the Darmstadt Block was purchased by an anonymous "Circle of Friends," for whom Beuys's secretary-assistant Heiner Bastian was appointed spokesman. Although Beuys and Bastian clearly knew the identities of the new owners, officially at least, not even the director of the Landesmuseum knew who constituted the Circle of Friends. As public protest mounted last December over the displacement of the Darmstadt Block, it was discovered that the "Friends" were in fact too few in number to constitute a circle: the sole owners, it turns out, are London's Anthony d'Offay gallery and a West Berlin real-estate mogul, Dr. Erich Marx. Both have confirmed their intention to sell the Block as a unit. The insurance value is currently estimated at DM14 million (around $7 million), but at auction or even in a private sale this extraordinary work by Beuys might well fetch double that amount.

Though he declines to reveal the asking price, Anthony d'Offay confirms that the range of DM14 to 28 million is, as an educated guess, not unreasonable. Informed journalists estimate that the ensemble was acquired by the "circle" of Marx and d'Offay for about DM3.5 million. Small wonder, then, that economists have been as enthralled by the Darmstadt story as the art press. Or that the "anonymous" owners have been accused of calculatedly biding their time and attempting to use the huge Berlin retrospective to increase the value of their investment. D'Offay concedes that "to buy such a work for a great deal of money and say nothing about it for so many years seems, indeed, peculiar." Initially, however, according to d'Offay, the intention was to protect the Block as a whole after the Darmstadt museum had failed to acquire it; the new owners presumed that it would eventually be disposed of with Beuys's cooperation and consent. Of course, neither d'Offay nor Marx could have predicted in 1980 that Beuys would die so soon, or that his work would so rapidly escalate in value. Both felt great affection for the artist and seemed genuinely prepared to respect his wish that the Darmstadt installation remain intact. Nonetheless, at this point, charges of market manipulation cannot be lightly dismissed.

Suspicions about such manipulations have been fueled in part by the booming market for Beuys's works. Prices for his pieces have increased phenomenally since his death, with the most anxious purchasing being done by competing German museums. As a result, in a case related to the Darmstadt drama, the Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg got caught up in the brewing Beuys scandal. There the problems also stemmed from a "lost" donation. In 1986, the museum had completed a new wing to house the extraordinary German Expressionist collection of author-publisher Lothar-Gunther Buchheim. But at the last minute the idiosyncratic collector, impatient with local bureaucratic demands, withdrew his promised gift. The museum was left with an empty wing. Into the breach stepped Heiner Bastian, prepared to fill the vacant galleries with works by Joseph Beuys—primarily from his own collection and that of his friend, Erich Marx (for whom he has served as advisor on art acquisitions for over a decade). Duisburg understandably accepted this proposal for a long-term loan; the poetic logic seemed irresistible. Shortly before his death, Beuys had made his final public appearance there, to accept the coveted Lehmbruck Prize.

Disputes soon arose over the works lent to the Lehmbruck Museum, particularly over the seemingly trivial (but financially and art historically consequential) issue of dating. Among the loans to Duisburg was *Fat Chair*, owned by Marx, a work that Bastian, as curator and catalogue author, dated 1964. This early dating made the work a companion to the famous *Fat Chair* in the Darmstadt Block, generally regarded as one of Beuys's most important works. Eva Beuys was shocked when she read the attribution; as she and her son Wenzel insisted, the work had been produced by Beuys in 1985. Shortly after Beuys's death, Bastian had appeared at the studio to collect the sculpture on behalf of Marx, who he claimed had purchased it from Beuys for DM60,000. This amount was modest, but not unreasonably low for a work produced in 1985; for an early piece of such art-historical consequence it was unthinkable. Bastian contended, however, that this was the true fat chair "prototype," and that its origin could be traced to 1964, even if it was "completed" later. For the Berlin retrospective, he compromised with the new dating 1964/1985.

Another dispute flared over the dating of a work from Bastian's own extensive Beuys collection. For the Lehmbruck Museum exhibition, *Bed* was dated 1963–64. Though the bed in question may indeed have been in Beuys's atelier in those early days, it was first used in an installation in 1982, at the "Zeitgeist" exhibition in Berlin. Bastian's sternest critics allow that, for Beuys, many objects in his immediate environment—a bed, a desk, a battery or a piano—might be seen as parts of a vast, unrealized "work in progress." And elements from one installation or performance might well be cannibalized later for new projects. Thus, exact dating often proves problematic; this is a point no Beuys scholar would deny. Bastian's "errors" in the Duisburg catalogue, however, were seen by the widow and her circle as crass misrepresentation.

Meanwhile, Eva Beuys puzzled over a check that she received

Beuys:* Crucifixion, *1962–63, wood nails, electric wire, thread, needle, rope, plastic bottles, newspaper, oil paint, plaster.

Beuys's champions insisted that the individual elements of the Darmstadt Block, densely and carefully arranged by Beuys himself, should not be moved under any circumstances.

from a Swiss art-investment firm for the sale of *Lightning with Stag in its Glare*. Shortly before his death, the artist had in fact authorized an edition of five bronze casts taken from a section of the earth-and-objects installation created for "Zeitgeist" [see *A.i.A.*, Mar. '83]. The first cast was sold to Frankfurt for DM2.5 million; the second was exhibited at last year's Documenta (and, according to Eva Beuys, carelessly installed by Bastian, like so many "scattered flowers"). When she received her share of the Frankfurt profits from a Swiss enterprise called "Ars Arcadia," the widow suspected tax-dodging maneuvers; she insisted that her husband never did business through Switzerland. Indeed, those who knew him well confirm that Beuys was a fastidious bookkeeper who astounded tax inspectors with his precision and accuracy. (Given his outspoken and highly vulnerable political-intellectual position, for Beuys a tax scandal would have spelled disaster.) Eva Beuys sensed that Bastian was behind the financial legerdemain of the *Stag* bronzes (which she refers to now as "a Bastian edition").

As frictions heated up between the heirs and the former factotum, Eva Beuys obtained a court order to block the use of the word "retrospective" for the show that Bastian was organizing for Berlin. "For that," she insisted, "it is still too early." And then, with a twist of the knife, she added that her husband, on his deathbed, had complained that Bastian could never install works properly.

For the Berlin exhibition, the city Senate clearly thought differently. It allocated DM1.9 million for the exhibition—the first major show since the artist's death—and it gave Heiner Bastian sole responsibility for its realization. Such an ambitious undertaking, the sponsors reasoned, would be an appropriate overture for the celebration of the city's 750th anniversary, a yearlong event acknowledging Berlin's role as "European Cultural Capital." Actually Beuys had no particular attachment to Berlin, beyond his happy collaborations with dealer René Block. But Bastian, Beuys's sidekick since 1975, lived in Berlin and knew his way through the local infrastructure. He argued that the momentous installation that Beuys had erected in the central court of the Martin Gropius-Bau for the "Zeitgeist" exhibition signalled its significance as a site in Beuys's shamanic ritual.

Skeptics were quick to express doubts about the feasibility of the undertaking—whether, without Beuys's magic touch and messianic presence, a true retrospective (of the kind staged by the Guggenheim Museum in 1979) was really possible. With the exception of certain drawings and multiples, Beuys produced few self-contained artifacts. His sculptures were virtually always by-products of lectures or performances, and thus existed primarily as relics of those events. Similarly, complex room installations resulted from confrontations—often intensely private—with particular locations, philosophical musings and specific political conditions. Such site-specific works do not travel well. In those rare instances in which Beuys showed older pieces in new contexts, they were always significantly altered. Hence, many observers tend to know isolated pieces in unique settings—the *Honey Pump* shown at Documenta in 1977 or the *Monument to the Stag* at "Zeitgeist" in 1982. When installations were acquired by museums or private collections, Beuys almost always personally adapted them to their new surroundings.

Yet, if anyone was qualified to approximate these results, it was plainly Heiner Bastian, who for 12 years served as Beuys's assistant, secretary, interpreter and traveling companion. During that time, he assisted in virtually every major installation the artist prepared. Without Bastian's insight into Beuys's working methods and his extensive knowledge of the disposition of various works throughout the world, assembling the pieces (including several environments never before shown in Germany) simply would not have been possible. As it was, many works consisted of dozens of individual components and the owners or curators of the works had to be brought to Berlin to supervise their "reconstruction." No effort was spared to recreate a Beuysian context—even to the extent of reconstructing exact replicas of the rooms in the Anthony d'Offay gallery in London where Beuys had installed the felt environment *PLIGHT* only months before his death.

For the vast Berlin exhibition, no fewer than 580 objects, drawings and room-filling environments were gathered. But it included nothing from the seminal Darmstadt Block. Initially, Bastian had hoped to transport roughly 80 percent of the ensemble to Berlin. This is what instigated the tremendous brouhaha in the press and in the art world. Gradually, Bastian reduced his requirements to "a few key pieces," and he finally abandoned all hopes of borrowing from Darmstadt when the Dia Art Foundation in New York refused to lend the crucial autobiographical photo-sculpture *Arena* if the Darmstadt Block was disturbed.

In this highly strained climate, Eva Beuys not only forbade the use of the word "retrospective," but she balked at permitting Beuys's works to be reproduced in the catalogue, citing her copyright privileges. Under German law an artist (or his or her heirs) retains copyright on a work of art in perpetuity, even if the work is sold; thus, reproduction rights, for instance, entail paying a copyright fee to the artist. In this case, royalty negotiations for the Berlin catalogue stretched on over several months, with the widow at last agreeing to limited permission for reproduction. Much of the negotiation centered on disputations over such "errors" as misdatings. Beuys scholar Lothar Schirmer said that during the negotiations he "felt like a mine-sniffing hound running between the front lines." Under the final agreement, the ten-pound, two-volume catalogue will stay in print for one year only, during which time it will presumably be combed for possible inaccuracies by interested scholars, heirs and insiders.

Erich Marx, one of the most important lenders to the non-retrospective, added to the friction of those preparatory months by forwarding a rather blunt request to Eva Beuys's attorney. In order to simplify preparations for the exhibition, could she surrender her copyright on all works to be shown in Berlin? For the widow, who retains little of her husband's work, who has the copyright as her principal inheritance and who embraces a veritable mission in defending Beuys's work against both forgeries and "spiritual misinterpretations," the letter was an unpardonable affront. Marx insists that his sole objective was to prevent the widow from creating obstacles to the demanding catalogue work for the exhibition, but given his previously announced intention to sell his extensive private collection (including numerous major Beuys works apart from the Darmstadt Block), it appeared to some as though the businessman wanted to wrest the binding copyrights from the widow in order to remove impediments to future sales.

Marx's representation of himself as a disinterested administrator for the exhibition was overturned by the news that his own business was keeping the books (without fee) and controlling the cash flow for the Senate-financed Beuys show. Then came the belated, forced revelation that, indeed, he owned 50 percent interest in the Darm-

Beuys:* Revolution Piano, *1969, piano, carnations, roses, oil paint, paper, installed in glass case, 71 by 71 by 28 inches. Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach.

"Zeitgeist" installation by Beuys showing Monument to the Stag *in central court, 1982; at the Martin Gropius-Bau, Berlin. Photo J. Littkemann.*

The "anonymous" owners of the Darmstadt Block have been accused of biding their time and attempting to use the huge Berlin retrospective to increase the value of their investment.

stadt Block. For many, the entire affair seemed like a parody of Beuys's own repeated warnings about the blurring of lines between culture and commerce.

Marx had first met Beuys through Heiner Bastian in 1975. Since then, Bastian has advised Marx on his contemporary art acquisitions—a collection that focuses on Beuys, Twombly, Warhol and Rauschenberg. Substantial portions of the Marx Collection are now on loan to the Abteiberg Museum in Mönchengladbach (along with Beuys works from Bastian's own collection, designated as "anonymous loans") and to Duisburg's Lehmbruck Museum. When these loans expire in 1992, the city of Berlin would like to gather them together in a new Museum of Contemporary Art. Plans for rebuilding the old Hamburg Train Station in Berlin to house the museum place the construction costs at an estimated DM70 million. The price tag for the Marx Collection itself is likely to be several times that amount.

But elsewhere other wheels are turning. Lothar Späth, Minister President of the wealthy, prestige-conscious state of Baden-Württemberg, also has plans for a new museum of contemporary art to be located in Stuttgart, just a short walk from James Stirling's celebrated Staatsgalerie. Späth is said to be among the bidders for the Darmstadt Block, and he was also negotiating with Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza to relocate his Swiss collection to a sumptuous Baroque palace outside Stuttgart. Plans for the DM100 million renovation of the palace were well under way before Thyssen elected to loan almost half of his 1,600 work collection to the Prado for at least 10 years [see *A.i.A.*, May '88].

The collector carousel turns and turns again. Marx, Buchheim, Thyssen-Bornemisza and others are all being courted with pomp and circumstance. But Marx, for one, is not thinking of a donation, and the Thyssen arrangement with the Prado may suggest that an outright donation is not forthcoming there either. Marx specifically seeks an outright sale, the proceeds from which would be used, in part, "to buy the works of younger artists." He would also retain certain holdings, such as the bravura suite of Beuys drawings entitled *The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*, first assembled in 1974, but including drawings from 1936 to 1972. (This suite of drawings alone constituted a kind of exhibition-within-an-exhibition in Berlin.) But for Marx, more than quality or value moves him to retain this group; he also has a strong sentimental attachment to Beuys and to the material. Whatever vested interests are now involved, the collector clearly idolized Beuys. He offered crucial financial support at several junctures, not only during the artist's lifetime, but after his death as well. When Beuys's environmental project for Kassel, *7,000 Oaks*, seemed in danger of falling short of the necessary funding, artists contributed works to be auctioned off to pay for the last plantings. Marx bought the entire lot.

The strife and recrimination that have boiled like a witch's kettle in recent months offer "tragic proof," according to Anthony d'Offay, that Beuys is no longer with us. The muddle, however, is in part of the artist's own making. He rarely relied on written contracts, sometimes made conflicting commitments and never hesitated to shift course in midstream. As long as he lived, the inconsistencies were resolved through his charismatic personality and his boundless generosity. Now that he is gone the blurred lines between art and commerce that he himself created have to be sorted out by collectors, dealers, scholars and heirs.

Beuys: **Fat Chair**, *1964, wooden chair with fat, 35⅜ by 11¾ by 11¾ inches. Ströher collection, Hessiches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt.*

Not least among these parties is Heiner Bastian, who presents a curious mixture of devotion to the master and self-interest. Bastian first viewed works by Joseph Beuys in 1969 at a special showing of the Ströher Collection in Berlin. Then a celebrated young poet, Bastian returned again and again to contemplate the dense, dimly lit showcases Beuys had assembled. Later that year, he met Beuys for the first time as the artist attempted a street-sweeping action that was interrupted by rioting students. As their friendship grew, Bastian was frequently called upon to assist with installations. In 1975, after Beuys had suffered a massive heart attack, his wife sent out a call for help. Beuys needed a companion for his travels and, more immediately, someone to relieve the depression brought on by his rest cure in Bad Tölz. Bastian found him there, in a sky-blue exercise suit, complaining that he was "dead in the brain." From that moment, Heiner Bastian became an intimate family friend: cherished by Eva Beuys as a "bastion" against claims for her overcommitted husband, known to others as "the bouncer," generously rewarded for his services with works by Joseph Beuys.

That private history was nowhere documented but everywhere apparent in the recent Berlin exhibition. The entire composition of the show was the poet's homage to a cherished master, and it was realized with scrupulous (though some say sterile) curatorial care. Every variation from the original installations was noted on copious wall labels and in the catalogue, together with every change that Beuys had made or contemplated, every circumstance of the work's

Andy Warhol: **Mercedes-Benz Formula 1 Racing Car 196 R Streamlined, 1954,** ***1987,***
acrylic on canvas, 160 by 180 inches. Courtesy Hans Mayer Gallery, Düsseldorf.

Both Beuys and Warhol had waged war on the time-honored and gallery-bound concept of originality by signing literally anything that chance or choice might thrust into their hands.

evolution. At times, this precision bordered on pedantry, as in the elaborate footnote that accompanied *PLIGHT* (1985), a felt-lined room that Beuys produced for the Anthony d'Offay gallery. Bastian's meticulous label explained to German viewers the numerous nuanced meanings the word conveys in English—from danger to promise to betrothal. Missing, however, was the real origin of the title, which is much simpler. When Beuys first discussed the installation with d'Offay, the dealer complained of his current plight: construction work behind the gallery, creating such an infernal noise that d'Offay feared he would have to move to another location. Beuys listened patiently, nodded and said, "I will make you a muffling sculpture." That the foreign word "plight" had a variety of meanings clearly appealed to the artist, but the anecdote says more about Beuys's generous empathy than the man-sized label with its linguistic elaborations.

Such didacticism in regard to *PLIGHT* was only one of many instances of Bastian's thoroughness, his attention to the minutest detail. His choice of the Martin Gropius-Bau had to do not only with the already-established Beuysian presence in "Zeitgeist," but also with the fact that the building's flowing sequence of 23 rooms would accommodate the show with a minimum of extraneous architecture. Moreover, the elegant building's setting—wedged against the Berlin Wall in the decayed, rowdy, radical district of Kreuzberg—maintained something of the feeling of confrontation that Beuys cultivated. Yet, for all their grace, the impeccably restored rooms did not, after all, work very well: Beuys's cherished materials—felt, fat, found objects of every conceivable sort—seemed perversely out of place, and the intense lighting stripped them of all mystery.

Only *PLIGHT* recaptured the primordial spell that Beuys achieved in the original London setting. Lined with bulky rolls of felt, with a somber, felt-encased piano as its only furniture, the space became a womb, a tomb, a temple, a grotto, a padded cell. Meditative, ambiguous, provocative, it evoked the quintessential spirit of the artist. Was he a sham or a shaman? That question was left unanswered, but as the singular effectiveness of *PLIGHT* made clear, without Beuys himself as mediator, many of his works suffer a tremendous loss.

Most Berlin critics were unconvinced by Bastian's decision not to imitate the dimly lit settings of Beuys's installations, but to present them as artifacts in a near-clinical light. The show was widely regarded as a disappointment. But most reviewers agreed that the drawings had lost none of their evocative powers. In addition to *The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland* in the Martin Gropius-Bau, shows of works on paper at the art academies in both West and East Berlin supported that judgment. The showing in East Berlin was the first exhibition of Beuys's work there.

By one of those coincidences that seem to stalk Beuys's posthumous fame, the East Berlin exhibition (later seen in Leipzig) coin-

cided with an exhibition of sculptures and drawings by Wilhelm Lehmbruck. Visitors to the Lehmbruck show were a sober, middle-aged, brow-wrinkling lot who plainly knew how to take their culture seriously. Occasionally they collided with the Beuys crowd—a young, restless, punk-style public that frequently stood in the rain and cold for hours to gain admission to the exhibition. The show's underlying political dimension was indicated by a comment scrawled in the guestbook: "Dear Joseph, It's good that you're dead. Otherwise we couldn't see you here."

That his art briefly united the divided city is an irony Beuys would have enjoyed. That the "revolutionary" East Berlin show was opened with orotund and self-congratulatory remarks by Johannes Rau, Minister President of Nordrhein-Westfalen, would have pleased him less. For it was Rau who, as Minister of Education, dismissed Beuys without notice from his position as professor at the Düsseldorf Academy in 1972. As part of his expanded definition of art, Beuys had demanded open entry to his classes, but Rau had refused to budge from his stubbornly bureaucratic position that the number of students in each class had to be limited. The dismissal resulted in massive protests from the students, but Beuys was not reinstated.

More recently, Rau has refused to comment on the lawsuit filed by Johannes Stüttgen against the state for the "willful destruction" of his private property: a fat wedge that Beuys had installed in a corner of his room at the Düsseldorf Academy in 1982. Stüttgen, a former Beuys student and assistant, claims his teacher made him a gift of the piece, which he left in place hoping, like many, that the room would be kept intact as a kind of memorial. One morning in October 1986, the fat was discovered to have been scraped away and discarded, allegedly by cleaning women who failed to recognize its art-historical value. The fact that the work was mounted nearly 12 feet above the floor lent some absurdity to this claim.

After losing his first trial (despite substantiation of his ownership), Stüttgen has appealed his case, demanding DM50,000 in compensation. His many supporters see the incident as further evidence of the Academy's—and by extension, the State's—continuing neglect of, even hostility toward, Beuys's achievements. (The renowned Sammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, for example, still owns no work by Düsseldorf's most celebrated contemporary artist.) The latest plan for the room that contained the Beuys work (a plan opposed almost single-handedly by sculptor Klaus Rinke, who was once a Beuys student and is now a professor at the Academy) is to convert it into an elegant faculty lounge.

In the midst of so much Beuysian brouhaha then, Darmstadt's modest show of Beuys and Warhol seemed like the eye of a hurricane. Although she was prevented by "scheduling conflicts" from attending Bastian's non-retrospective in Berlin, Eva Beuys had been conspicuously present for the non-opening in Darmstadt on the same day. She was outspokenly pleased to find her husband's cherished Darmstadt Block intact. Meanwhile, even Anthony d'Offay concedes that the ideal solution might be for the Block to remain in Darmstadt, but he adds that in that city "there is, regrettably, no contemporary art context. Beuys was a world artist who needs an international audience." On the other hand, many critics find the dusty setting ideal. The Landesmuseum is a typical 19th-century "educational" potpourri: it contains mastodon tusks, Roman pottery, fossils, botanical specimens, salon painting—and the Beuys installation. Negotiations are now proceeding between the "Circle" and both Stuttgart and Darmstadt. There are vague but repeated rumors about a Beuys Museum in Düsseldorf. A final decision, said d'Offay as this article went to press, could be reached soon.

While Beuys's name seemed to appear in the press daily, it was overshadowed for a time by the unexpected high visibility of Andy Warhol. Their names were linked not only by the Darmstadt exhibition and the coincidence of their recent deaths, but also by their shared reputation for outrageous conduct as perceived by the German media. The fact that Beuys and Warhol seemed to symbolize to the press that alchemical ability of artists to transform everyday objects into great value and wealth was characterized by the circumstance of their first meeting, frequently recited in news accounts.

Beuys and Warhol first met officially on May 18, 1979, in the elegant Düsseldorf gallery of Hans Mayer. For those who witnessed the two approaching each other across the polished granite floor, the moment had all the ceremonial aura of two rival popes meeting in Avignon. Warhol characteristically snapped the shutter of his camera and captured the wistful image of Beuys that would become one of his most successful late portraits. (A pair of these portraits of Beuys was later exhibited in the "Art of the Seventies" exhibition at the 1980 Venice Biennale, just a short distance from where Beuys had installed his *Capital Room.)* Whatever sense of rivalry one might have expected from that first meeting in Düsseldorf was rapidly dispelled. The two cult figures had much in common as they both instantly recognized; the American with the silver wig and the German with the silver plate in his skull shared, indeed, deep-seated philosophical affinities. Both had waged war on the time-honored and gallery-bound concept of originality with the same simple strat-

Warhol:* Neuschwanstein, *1987, screenprint, 33½ by 23⅝ inches. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

Warhol's "Last Pictures," commissioned by Daimler-Benz, celebrate the car as icon, as symbol of luxury and speed, but also as sum and substance of a century's evolving industrial design.

egy: they signed literally anything thrust into their hands.

Beuys also understood the fundamentally conceptual nature of Warhol's art. Indeed, German critics were the first to perceive the political/conceptual dimension of Warhol's work, recognizing from the start an intellectual authority that remains undiminished even in the seemingly "lightweight" themes of the late work. In fact, though it is little known in the U.S., in the last decade of his life Warhol increasingly addressed German motifs permeated by history: Tischbein's *Goethe*, Cologne Cathedral, Frederick the Great, Einstein, the fairy castle at Neuschwanstein. Despite the rehabilitation of traditional themes in the romantic, painterly canvases of the Neo-Expressionists, few German artists in the '80s would have dared such a blatant renewal of Germanic subjects. They suggest a mixture of kitsch and nationalism that can still produce nasty overtones. Unburdened by historical imperatives, Warhol's approach to those themes, nonetheless, assumed a semiotic complexity worlds removed from the tongue-in-cheek literalness of the soup cans. Thus, it came as no great surprise that the Tübingen show of "Cars: The Last Pictures" [Jan. 17–Mar. 13] caused a journalistic stir even in the midst of the Beuys scandals.

At the time of Warhol's unexpected death, only his intimates knew of this final series of variations on a "found" commercial theme. Among them was Hans Mayer, who had guided Warhol's numerous German projects and brought him together with Daimler-Benz. In 1986, Warhol met with the carmakers to discuss a way of commemorating the centennial of the invention of the automobile. The conservative-minded firm was at first uneasy about the prospect of collaboration, but they delivered photographic material to Warhol and the artist went to work. For a trial spin, he chose the Mercedes experimental model of 1970, with its sleek fiberglass body and batlike, swing-up doors. Daimler's board of directors was sufficiently impressed to commission an entire series of auto portraits, beginning with the *Benz Patent Motor Car of 1886*. The manufacturer was entitled to choose part of the total production for its new headquarters near Stuttgart. With increasing enthusiasm and engagement, in the last eight months of his life Warhol completed nearly half the projected assignment; he made the last, largest and perhaps most beautiful paintings in the series during the final weeks of his life. There are, in all, 12 large-format drawings and 35 paintings of Mercedes-Benz cars.

As the Tübingen show documented, the results of Warhol's final confrontation with a European theme produced uneven results. Hampered by the fussy, buggy-style constructions of the pioneer years, the artist produced filigree silhouettes that seem almost coyly nostalgic. The later, more streamlined designs were better suited to his esthetic—the racing cars of 1937 and 1954, the classic 300 DL coupe of 1954. Viewed from above, the 1937 model, with its rocketlike body, becomes abstract. Like the soup cans and Coca-Cola bottles, it is a compact, self-contained form hovering in space. Thanks to the German commission, the artist applied his idiom for the first time to European consumer goods. More importantly, in this project he explored a design-conscious tradition with a rich and influential history. This is no longer the plebian, here-and-now, throw-away culture that glared from the canvases of the 1960s.

Drenched in pastels or in primary colors that vibrate against a black background, these automobile images recall the lushness of the artist's pre-Pop illustrations. "The Last Pictures" confirm Warhol's brilliance as a colorist. Above all, they remind us of his immense skill as a draftsman. His voluptuous, rhythmic, nervously assured gesture was never more compelling than here. As in his later celebrity portraits, such as *Peter Ludwig* (1981), the cars are painted with the aid of silk screens, but the immediacy of the manual technique creates a vigorous dialogue with the static photographs of the subjects. By inserting squares of contrasting color into some of his car studies, Warhol "blotted out" the photographic image so that only the drawn line remains.

The results of the Daimler-Benz commission are lyric, exuberant, virtuoso. No future appraisal of the artist's achievements can avoid this finale to his rich encounter with German corporate culture and its symbolism. Nothing could be farther removed from the tabloid reality explored in the "Disaster" series of car crashes which Warhol painted in the early '60s. "The Last Pictures" celebrate the automobile as icon, as symbol of luxury and speed, but also as the sum and substance of a century's intriguing evolution in industrial design. As with so many events and non-events in Warhol's life, hindsight lends a particular potency to this last commission. The man who overnight created his own "superstars" and for two decades was a conspicuous star in the international art firmament applied his talents, finally, to a product whose logo is a silver star.

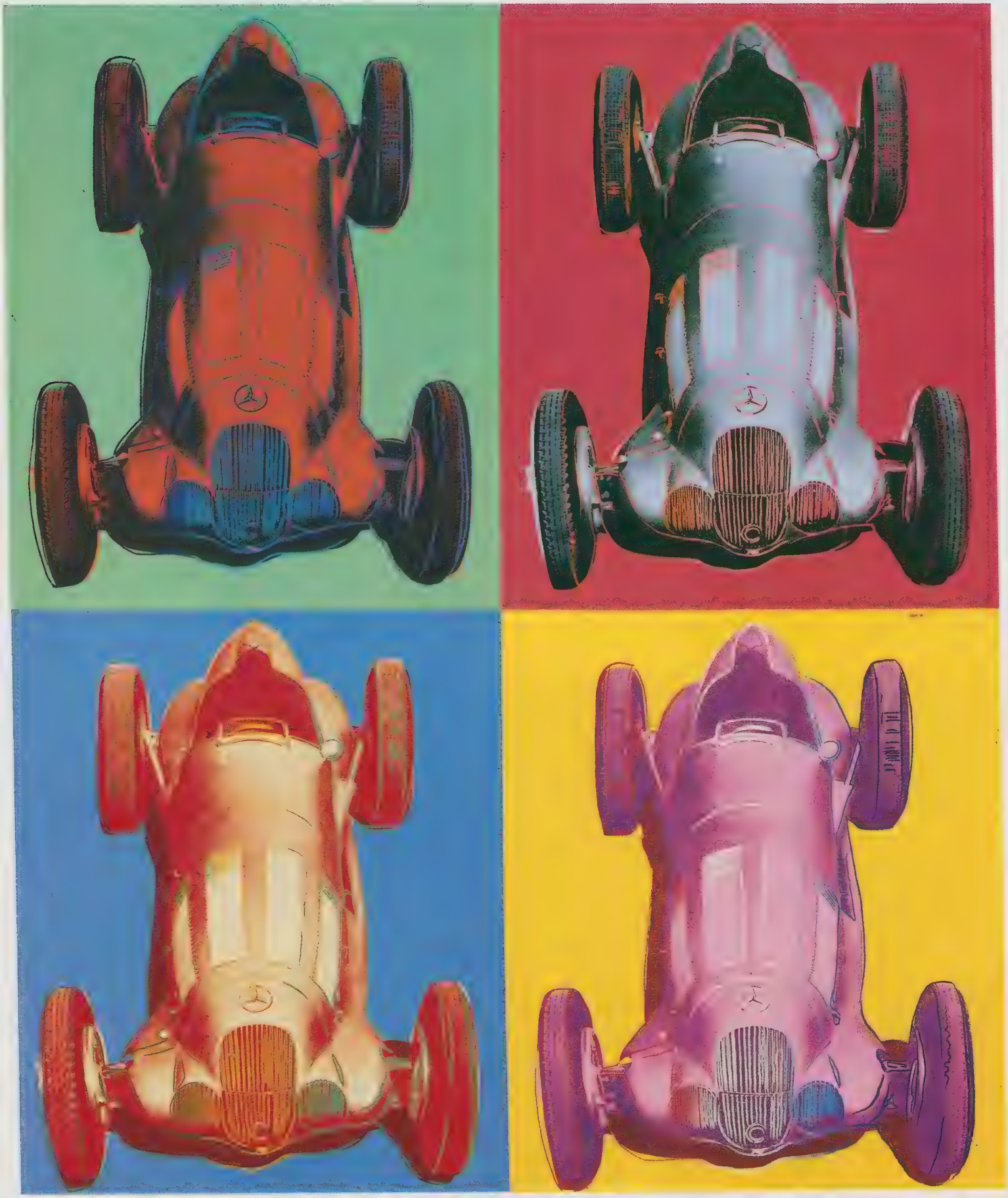
Meanwhile, Warhol's "Cars" are slated for a worldwide assembly line of exhibitions over the next year. They are scheduled for the Guggenheim in September; then they embark on a multi-stop tour of Japan, following which they return to Europe via the Kunsthalle in Bern. Stockholm's Moderna Museet, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the National Gallery in Berlin are all interested in showing the suite of paintings and drawings.

Launching such an international art coup from the tiny university town of Tübingen seems, at first glance, improbable. Outwardly, the appearance of the local Kunsthalle only intensifies the implausibility. Wedged into an anonymous grey suburb, the building's profile suggests a family-planning clinic or a kindergarten. But under the remarkable guidance of Götz Adriani, this understaffed institution has repeatedly staged innovative exhibitions (of historical as well as contemporary art) whose attendance figures often exceed the town's total population. And Daimler-Benz's handsome new headquarters is less than 20 miles away.

There Warhol's last pictures will finally come to rest, as part of a corporate collection that grows increasingly more wide-ranging. Walter de Maria's *Five Continents*, a massive and serenely beautiful installation recently created for the Stuttgart Staatsgalerie, was financed by the firm, and in an altered form will also be a part of the corporate collection. It seems likely, however, that the extraordinary Warhol works will remain the collection's highlights.

Certainly Adriani, the director of the Kunsthalle Tübingen, has every reason to be proud of his coup. Less comfortable, surely, was his role as "special advisor" to Heiner Bastian for the Beuys show in Berlin. Yet, these were not his first encounters with the nuanced complicities of the German art market. Nor are they likely to be his last. If the Darmstadt Block does in fact go to the new museum in Stuttgart, the odds-on favorite to receive the work as first director of that institution is Götz Adriani. And thus another circle closes: Adriani was an apprentice at the Darmstadt Museum when Beuys first installed his works there. □

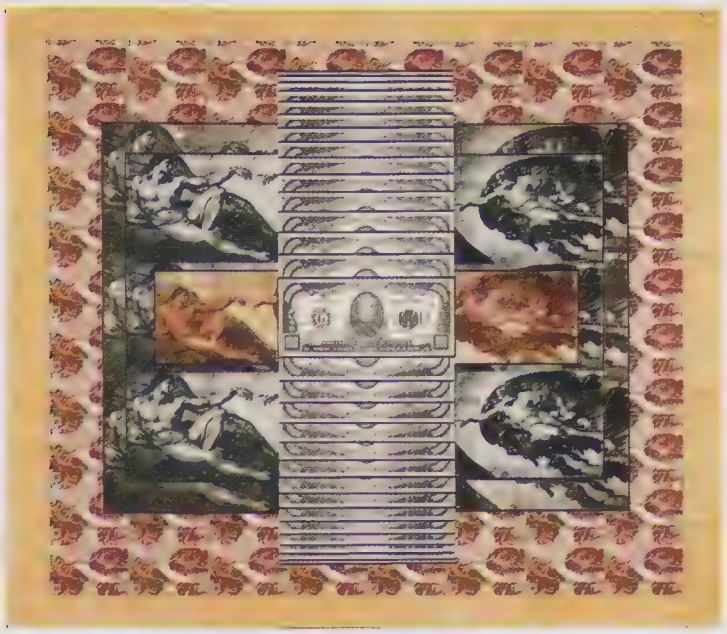
Author: *David Galloway teaches American Studies at Ruhr University, Bochum, West Germany.*



Warhol: Mercedes-Benz Formula Racing Car W 125, 1937, *1986, graphite on paper, 24 by 31½ inches. Courtesy Hans Mayer Gallery, Düsseldorf.*

Cash Art

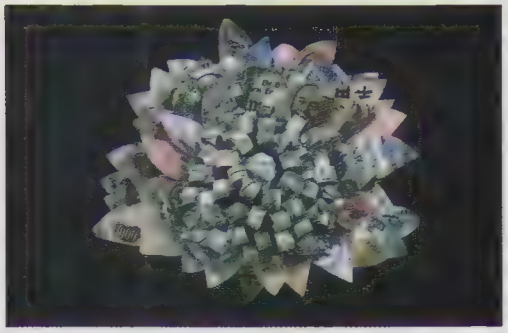
Coin of the realm, filthy lucre, found money or bankable subject? Ten artists use it . . .



Randolfo Rocha: Re-Creation, *1987, acrylic and collage on wood, 46 by 53 inches. Courtesy Stux Gallery.*

Andy Warhol: One Dollar, *1961, pencil on paper, 24 by 18 inches. Private collection.*

Robert O'Dowd: $1.00, *1962, oil on canvas, 45 by 48 inches.*

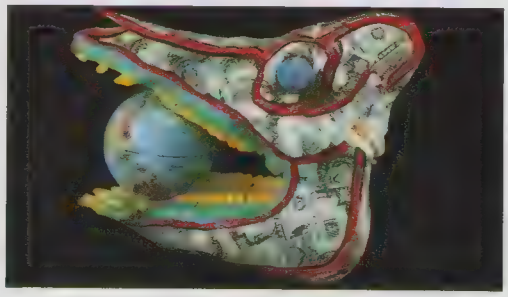


Barton Benes: Money Crown, *1983, paper money mounted on steel base, 12 inches high. Courtesy Fendrick Gallery.*

Walter Robinson: Cash, *1984, acrylic on canvas, 24 inches square.*

Branda Miller: The Almighty Dollar, *1987, Spectacolor lightboard; installed at One Times Square. Courtesy Public Art Fund, photo © Jenifer SeAcor.*

Arch Connelly: Amphora, *1986, pennies and acrylic on vase, 11 by 9½ by 6 inches. Courtesy Charles Cowles.*



David Wojnarowicz: Untitled, 1985, pig skull with maps, xerox money and acrylic paint. Courtesy Gracie Mansion.

Stephen Varble's 1976 performance: Chemical Bank Encounter. *Photo Peter Hujar.*

Les Levine's self-portrait with silver dollars from his 1976 Game Room *installation.*

Woman's Place

With more than 83,000 members, the new National Museum of Women in the Arts has successfully exploited corporate-style fund-raising, profitable rental of its gallery space and an aggressive membership drive. But critics are asking: Whose interests does the museum really represent?

BY ANNE HIGONNET

When it was founded in 1981, the National Museum of Women in the Arts was an institution whose time seemed to have come. This was to be a museum that would at last award tangible recognition to women's achievements in art. The museum's promotional literature described it as a mission: "Join us and expand the horizons of art." The museum proposed not only a celebration of women's art, but also a forward-looking retort to centuries of ignorance and dismissal. It would participate in the long process of redressing the inequities that women still face.

Since its opening in May 1987, the NMWA has fulfilled at least some of these expectations. At the most obvious level, the museum provides an impressively material symbol for the contribution of women to culture. It is housed in a $12,750,000 five-story landmark building, once an all-male Masonic temple, two blocks from the White House. Its permanent collection consists of over 500 works; it has a library, a staff and a schedule of exhibitions. Moreover, the museum has financial support; it is funded by corporations, foundations and a very large membership. To date the museum has more than 83,000 base-level members; nearly all of them are women and each has contributed a minimum of $25. In addition, there are 500-odd members in a higher donation bracket. Together, all these contributors have enabled the museum to raise over $19 million toward their fund-raising goal of $30 million.

Since its inception, however, the museum has also been extremely controversial. Even before it actually opened its doors, questions about the NMWA's institutionalization of feminism were widespread. Were women being hailed or condemned by a sex-segregated institution? How could or should "women" and "art" be defined? Had too many compromises been made to fund the museum? Responses to these questions came from left and right, artists and viewers, critics and academics, men and women. Each side had its arguments. These were, however, more often than not less about the museum itself than about feminism.

Perhaps a diversity of counterpositions was to be anticipated by such an undertaking, but what was less predictable was the extensive media attention these reactions received. Mainstream newspapers and journals, such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *U.S. News & World Report* and *Newsweek*, not generally known for their coverage of women's issues, were now devoting prominent columns to debates over some of the most fundamental ideas pertaining to gender in cultural representation. In 1987 alone, over 250 feature articles were written about the museum.[1] These articles provided a context (unimaginable in sheer numbers by such advocacy groups as the Guerrilla Girls or the Women's Caucus for Art) for rehearsing the shocking statistics of discrimination against women in the arts. For once, the press and its public were confronted with such facts as the ratio of male to female artists in museums (95–98 percent of the works in American art museums are by men, even though 38 percent of all American artists are women; and, at the Museum of Modern Art, from 1981–87, only 12 percent of the artists exhibited were women[2]), and the earning capacity of women artists (American women artists earn 33 cents to every dollar by a male artist, compared to women in all professions, who earn 59 cents to every dollar earned by a man).

Thus the museum immediately presented a paradox: Can you build a museum according to traditional funding and staffing practices but on the basis of a controversial, revisionist understanding of art history? The NMWA provides an answer to that question, one which unsettles both right-wing and left-wing assumptions. Although the NMWA is financially, administratively and art-historically conservative, it represents a powerful and widespread female constituency, only moderately feminist and politically centrist. Built on the tangible commitment of these women to their moderate stance, the NMWA represents their strong belief in themselves and their values. Clearly the NMWA embodies a variety of positions, but its very existence is taken as a sign of a moderate feminist accession to mainstream political status. A cultural institution like this museum seems to be the final assertion of mainstream authority.

Of course it is the NMWA's bid for institutional credibility that has elicited the controversy. But, as it turns out, the bid itself is relatively banal. Like all institutions, the NMWA has attempted to define its position in the realm of culture and to attract a constituency to support that role. What is remarkable about the NMWA is the strength of the response it has received, measured in terms of membership, donors, volunteers and corporate support. This

Wilhelmina Cole Holladay, founder and president of the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

The planning of the NMWA has from the first been based on its consumerist function. Ultimately, there is no distinction between its cultural mission and its commercial substructure.

achievement is no accident. Along with the acquisition of the building, the collection and long-range sources of income, the NMWA is structured around sound financial planning.

In a sense, the establishment of the NMWA is a pure marketing phenomenon. For several years, in fact, members were investing in a museum that was primarily a paper scheme. Before the NMWA even had a building, 55,000 people had joined. This phenomenon was engineered in part through an extensive direct-mail campaign carried out by the public relations firm of Craver, Mathews, Smith, and Company. When the firm took on the NMWA account in 1985, the museum had only 8,000 members. In the last year and a half alone, mailings have elicited 29,000 new memberships. The total of more than 83,000 members that the museum's concerted membership drive has garnered to date is extraordinary by conventional museum standards (the Corcoran Gallery of Art, a comparable-sized museum in Washington, for instance, has 3,500 members). The campaign succeeded in part because of its strategic identification of five main groups of women in preexisting mailing lists: female members of professional arts organizations, museum-shop customers (culled from museum catalogue orders), cultural program supporters (such as patrons of public television), feminists (supporters of women's rights causes) and recipients of upscale mail-order catalogues. Promotional mailings suggested that the NMWA had something to offer women from all of these diverse groups, and, as a consequence, it attracted extensive support from women of modest income with modest political expectations. One member wrote, "My contribution is small, but it is the support of one more woman."[3]

The driving force behind this grass-roots membership campaign is Wilhelmina Holladay, called "Billie" by her friends. Almost single-handedly she has orchestrated the success of the NMWA. She and her husband conceived of the museum, donated to it their private art collection of works by women artists, found and administered the renovation of the museum's site and led the fund-raising drive. Holladay likes to explain her story as a simple narrative with a beginning—the purchase of her first painting by a woman artist 20 years ago—and an end—the founding of the museum. Holladay also likes to say, "Don't write about me. Write about the museum." But it is impossible to understand the financial success of the NMWA without writing about Billie Holladay.

Caroline Hunt Schoellkopf, the richest woman in America and a founding member of the NMWA, has a straightforward explanation for her generous participation: "I had faith in Billie. With her drive and dedication and dynamism, I knew the project would be a success."[4] Holladay comes from a wealthy background. Her husband, Wallace Holladay, is a prominent Washington real-estate developer and entrepreneur. Billie Holladay uses her social prominence and personal contacts to further her fund-raising projects. But more than actual money raised, these contacts have allowed Holladay to attract to the museum a certain prestige that money cannot buy. For instance, Barbara Bush, wife of the Vice-President, cut the ribbon at the NMWA's inaugural ceremony in May '87, and Nancy Reagan has been the titular head of the museum's last three annual balls.

Holladay's personal stake in the museum and her savvy understanding of the world of money have been key ingredients in inducing wealthy patrons, including major corporations, to contribute to the museum. A total of 128 corporations, foundations and other organizations have given $5,000 or more to the museum, and 59 other businesses have supported the NMWA with in-kind contributions of materials or services. AT&T donated $100,000 for the library and reading room, while United Technologies contributed $500,000 to underwrite the museum's inaugural exhibition, "American Women Artists, 1830–1930" [Apr. 10–June 14, '87]. If corporations have been unusually generous, however, Billie Holladay has the answer: "I speak their language. And I'm not sure [museum] people always do."[5] Gordon Bowman, director of United Technologies' art program responsible for the half-million-dollar grant, agrees, saying, "Billie Holladay is sensible as well as enthusiastic. Corporations *like* people to be sensible."[6]

While no one has faulted Holladay for her pragmatism with regard to fund-raising, she has been criticized for ignoring every other aspect of the museum. As recently as last spring, Holladay answered charges about the museum's nonexistent pedagogical policy by saying, "I will do anything in my power to educate, but I will not let it become political. If we don't become a controversial issue, the business community will continue to support us. At the moment my major concern is raising the money to refurbish the building."[7] This "sensible" approach has produced rather extraordinary results in terms of the acquisition and renovation of the museum's new home.

The final, $8-million redecoration of the former Masonic temple did not please everyone, however. Describing the grandiose entrance hall with its pink-and-white marble, its three enormous crystal chandeliers, its lofty gold-leaf ceiling and its two-story elevation, an *Oakland Tribune* correspondent complained that "the entering visitor, blinded by the glare of new marble, looks in vain for any sign of art in the immense first floor lobby . . . and must search out the galleries tucked away in a portion of the third floor." This same writer went on to characterize the hall as "restored in the fussiest manner imaginable" and in a "color scheme reminiscent of a discredited 'feminine' taste."[8] The entrance hall has also been compared to Schrafft's and "early Nieman-Marcus."[9]

These slighting allusions to commercial architecture are, in some ways, apt, since almost all of the functional space on the ground floor (much of which is taken up by the vast, empty lobby) is devoted to consumerism and fund-raising. In addition to the information desk, a tiny hub of practical information and membership brochures, there is a large gift shop and the ritzy lobby itself, now called "the Martin Marietta Hall," after the prominent defense contractor who donated $1.5 million toward its renovation. An NMWA brochure characterizes the Hall as "a beautiful and well equipped, non-commercial space," and notes that it is capable of seating 500 people for a dinner and that it will accommodate 1,000 people for a reception. In Washington, a city noted for parties, this venue, just two blocks from the White House, seems too good to be true.

The cost for renting the Hall—as the brochure points out, "a tax-deductible contribution"—is $7,500 per evening. It is booked nearly every night. Alternatively, the galleries, where "entertaining associates surrounded by outstanding works of art makes a party truly special," can be rented for up to $3,500. Accessory docents are "$50 per docent." Fully understanding the income-producing possibilities of their space, the museum has installed in the basement of an adjacent building a $1-million, fully equipped caterer's kitchen. Ridgewell Caterers has already signed up to rent out the building once a week for the next year. But if, as Benjamin Forgey wrote in the *Washington Post*, "this museum starts off taking a back seat to parties,"[10] that was part of the intention. The opulent Martin Marietta Hall is at once a product of corporate financing and a

The Sculpture of Camille Claudel

Joan Mitchell once looked at me in horror when I admitted that I didn't know who Camille Claudel was. Long a quiet presence at the Musée Rodin in Paris, where a few of her works are usually on view, Claudel (1864–1943) was the elder sister of the poet Paul Claudel, the lover of Auguste Rodin for 15 years and a brilliant sculptor in her own right. The romantic tragedy of her story derives in large part from the fact that after she broke up with Rodin in 1898, she seems to have become increasingly mad; in 1913 her brother was forced to commit her. Claudel spent the next 30-odd years in institutions and, having already destroyed a good part of her work, never sculpted again. Thus the bits and pieces of her sculptural oeuvre that we see in a traveling exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts are precious morsels of a fragmentary story. For a fuller understanding, we have to look also at Rodin's work—particularly the *Burghers of Calais* and the *Gates of Hell*—whole sculptural worlds in which Claudel reportedly played a considerable part. She was not only Rodin's muse and model (in her youth she was defiantly beautiful, and posed for Rodin's *La France*), but also a catalyst, collaborator and creator. She is now credited with having given Rodin some of his best ideas.

Camille Claudel:* Maturity, *1907, bronze, 31½ by 21⅝ by 13 inches.

Looking at this unassuming show, organized by the artist's great-niece Reine-Marie Paris (whose biography of Claudel has also just appeared in English), we are constantly tempted to read into the works Claudel's later madness. Similarly, we are inclined to see in the various busts of her brother portraits of a well-socialized monster (he was for many years the French ambassador to Washington) who may have punished his sister for his own unbridled sensuality. Claudel herself looks almost unbearably severe—stern and tight-lipped—in a painted self-portrait of 1900 (as this exhibition reveals, she was also a perfectly decent fin-de-siècle painter). In a marvelous bronze by Rodin from 1889 she looks more like a wounded Pierrot with a bandaged head. Some of the best pieces in this show are small plaster heads of grimacing old people (*Head of an Old Blind Man Singing* is somewhat in the tradition of Daumier) and studies of children with bulging eyes and puckering, half-opened mouths. Claudel was also adept at the highly realistic society bust of the 1880s; her head of the painter Léon Lhermitte is a fascinating document, from the hair matted down in back to the quizzical creased forehead and crinkly eyes. Here Claudel is in full command of late Carpeaux-like textures.

When it comes to the sort of high-flown allegories at which Rodin was a master, Claudel shows that she was the one who could really get down. Her small bronze allegory, *Maturity* (1907), looks like one of Rodin's nude burghers (or Rodin himself) being led off by an old crone and being separated forever from a young woman (supposedly modeled after Rose Beuret, the longtime "other woman" whom Rodin later married). In this case, "maturity" seems more like spite from a jilted lover. Also, Claudel's drapery has a curious way of sprouting from the man's crotch as if it were a flame. The monumental *Perseus and Gorgon* (1898–1902) in marble clearly suggests a demented self-portrait in the gorgon's decapitated head, and the implication is that this is what Rodin had been doing to Claudel for years. Likewise the colossal embracing couple variously titled *Sakountala* and *Vertumnus and Pomona* (1888–1905). This looks like the original inspiration for Rodin's *The Kiss*—perfectly charming—until Claudel starts hacking off the feet and arms of the lovers. But perhaps the most extraordinary work in this self-destructive mode is the precocious bust of a crouching woman (1884–85) posed in the primal squat of a Peruvian mummy, a pose that would later appeal to Gauguin and Munch, yet in Claudel's case with the deformed feet of a society woman who wears high heels.

At its best, Claudel's work has this mix of primitivism and Parisian chic. Her shocking nude couple engaged in *The Waltz* (1891–1905) not only anticipates Ravel and Munch, but for years it sat on the desk of her dear friend Claude Debussy. And, astonishingly, her small figure group *Gossips* (1893–1905) is composed of nude women with negroid features and French chignons. Clustered around an elder who imparts secrets in a kind of Platonic cave-room, the gossips seem to personify the voices that drove Claudel mad. How strange that the doyenne of Art Nouveau dish could so clearly prophesy Henry Moore's bronze groups against backdrops and then be almost completely forgotten until her first posthumous retrospective in 1951. By that time, all the attention was about 50 years too late.

Sakountala, *1888 (reproduced here, 1987 bronze cast), 7⅞ by 4⅜ by 22⅝ inches. Private collection.*

Perseus and the Gorgon, *1898–1902, marble, 77¼ by 43¾ by 39 inches. Private collection.*

—Brooks Adams

"Camille Claudel" was organized by the National Museum of Women in the Arts and the Asahi Shimbun. It was first shown at the Tokyu Gallery of Art in Shibuya, Tokyo, where it appeared from Aug. 28 to Sept. 16, 1987. It traveled to the Tokyu Gallery of Art, Sapporo (Oct. 8–Oct. 20), the Ishibashi Museum of Art, Kurume (Oct. 30–Nov. 29), the Sogo Museum of Art, Yokohama (Jan. 20–Feb. 7, '88) and the Daimaru Gallery of Art, Osaka (Mar. 16–Mar. 28). The exhibition closed at the NMWA, where it was shown from Apr. 25 to May 31, 1988. There is an illustrated catalogue with essays by co-curators Reine-Marie Paris and Meredith Martindale.

Photos courtesy National Museum of Women in the Arts

Founded and funded in a matrix of cultural power, the NMWA unwittingly challenges its own terms, warning that it is now impossible for gender to be thought of as an entirely political issue.

catalyst for further contributions.

The museum's rationalization for the Martin Marietta Hall is that it will continue to generate income for the institution, guaranteeing its independence and allowing it the freedom to allocate its funds as it wishes. In this respect the Hall is like an endowment, like those of many museums, foundations and universities; the money provides for the future, and the sources are rarely questioned. And in terms of the allocation of space, one could argue that the NMWA is little different from the Metropolitan Museum or the National Gallery's East Wing, both of which have opulent lobbies. What startles in the case of the NMWA, however, is that the planning of the entire museum, from its very inception, seems to have been based on its consumerist functions. The ostensible distinction made by the NMWA between its cultural mission and its commercial substructure is ultimately no distinction at all. Rather, the NMWA deftly exploits a confluence of contemporary gender, business, museum and marketing histories.

Advertising has always, from its earliest days, proposed analogies between women's "creativity" and their consumption of commodities. Nineteenth-century advertising, in the early form of fashion plates, frequently constructed images of femininity that depended on the representation of shopping, or the consumption of fashion, as an artistic endeavor. Visual or textual association of women with the production of art often reinforced this commodified definition of feminine creativity.[11] Among the most frequent fashion-plate motifs, as early as the 1840s, are women sketching, women painting, women visiting museums and salons and women looking into art-shop vitrines. This commercial strategy fulfilled two functions: it modified the commodity's commercial taint with the sanctified aura of esthetic status, and it thereby minimized women's subjugation to the crass economic imperatives of consumerism by valorizing their shopping as a creative activity.

Though the intention of this identification of female consumers with art has generally been the sale of non-art items (such as clothes, perfume, liquor or cigarettes), the premises of the advertising strategy have developed a life of their own. The representational norms employed in such advertisements, for example, reveal underlying social attitudes toward women which may be at variance with the overt message conveyed. Thus, while the advertisements may offer to women the "power" of consumption and choice, in fact, they often show the female models as passive spectators or as, themselves, semi-animate art objects.

Art institutions—museums chief among them—have exploited this triangular association of women, art and consumption, to create a specialized market for themselves. Of course, selling culture is the up-to-date museum's business. But the successful museum today presses the identification of women and art as far as it will yield profits—and no farther. The Manet exhibition of 1983, to cite a notorious instance, was represented on posters, advertisements and even the cover of the catalogue by the image of a beautiful model cropped from Manet's famous painting *The Balcony*. As it happened, the model pictured was Berthe Morisot, one of France's most significant women painters. Yet, the same national French museum administration that used her face to sell the Manet exhibition later declined to host an exhibition of her own work (which instead traveled in '87-'88 to three museums in the U.S., including the National Gallery). As the object of a man's gaze, Morisot was salable, but as a producer of her own vision she was not.

More and more, as museums seek to develop their female constituency, they have transformed themselves into the image of their own promotional campaigns, further cementing their alliances with consumer culture. Deborah Silverman has cogently analyzed this political and sociological phenomenon in her book *Selling Culture: Nancy Reagan, Diana Vreeland, Bloomingdale's and the Met*, making the argument that the linking of upper-crust fashion and slick merchandising at the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute reflects the decadence of Reagan-era trickle-down economics.[12] Emulating the social and financial successes of the Costume Institute's curator, Diana Vreeland, the NMWA held two costume exhibitions of its own during its early fund-raising years. According to a review of one of these gala events, titled "In the Glow of Givenchy," there were "as many Givenchy dresses on the guests as there were in the exhibition." Each ticket cost $150, and over 650 Washingtonians attended; over $100,000 was raised for the museum.[13] Moreover, recognizing that political and diplomatic figures often relegate cultural functions to their wives, the NMWA has deliberately incorporated these women into the support structure of the museum. The wives of many foreign ambassadors have formed special committees on behalf of the museum to encourage representation of women from their countries. And prominent among the museum's advisors is Mrs. Adnan Khashoggi, wife of one of the richest men in the world.

Historically, American museums have relied upon the volunteerism of women both as docents and as staff members, but it is somewhat surprising how pervasive this dependence is even today. Three museums in the Boston area provide a telling cross section. At the Museum of Fine Arts, where gallery instruction is conducted by 80 volunteer docents, all 80 are women. The MFA also has an active and committed "Ladies Committee" that carries out numerous fund-raising functions; this group comprises 70 volunteer women. At the Harvard Art Museums, the docent program is regarded as more competitive and prestigious because of the intellectual rigor of the university. Although this is a volunteer position, over half of the applicants are rejected. Of the current 30 docents, 29 are women. Finally, at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the part-time docents are paid once they complete the training course successfully; of the 12 current docents, 9 are women. These women, then, provide the largely unpaid labor upon which many art museums rely. Their commitments and training are not casual. Members of the Boston MFA's Ladies Committee serve a full-time, four-year term, and "aides" at the Toledo Art Museum must sign on for 10 years. Given this pattern, one might argue that the NMWA's use of female docents is not out of the ordinary.

For many critics, however, this volunteerist proclivity extends to the staff, which many have accused of being ill-prepared for their positions. Artist Miriam Shapiro pointed out that such a museum "needs a staff of the highest quality and an active, rotating board of professional advisors." But, she added, "It seems to me the code word here is Junior League."[14] In fact, one of the earliest allies of the NMWA *was* the Junior League, a politically conservative women's volunteer organization that gave the museum a $90,000 grant to train volunteers. Holladay said, "I think people work better for love rather than money. If you get paid, well, that's an added bonus, it's not necessary."[15] Art historian Ann Sutherland Harris, an advisor to the museum, has been quoted as saying, "I'm afraid the museum will have a credibility problem unless it hires someone with real training in 19th- and 20th-century art. It's a little like running a Holocaust museum and refusing to hire Jews."[16] Now the museum has a director, Dr. Anne-Imelda Radice, formerly chief curator at the U.S. Capitol. Radice oversees a professional staff of 16 and another 80 volunteers. In addition, the museum has recently hired its first curator of contemporary art, Helaine Posner, previously director of the University Gallery of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The museum still has no curator for any other field.

Amidst charges that "growing ranks of disillusioned former employees [and] advisory committee members whose advice has been sought and then ignored are now adding their voices . . . to those who have been uncomfortable with the concept from the start,"[17] the museum has made new appointments and has attempted to hire free-lance professional curators and advisors. The inaugural exhibition, for instance, was organized by a free-lance curator, the art historian Eleanor Tufts. Moreover, the museum asserts that several art historians and foundation counselors have played a part in the making of policy decisions. As Holladay reports, "We asked for professional advice and followed it. The National Endowment for the Humanities gave us a grant for $15,000 for three seminars of museum professionals to discuss priorities, staff, program. We followed their suggestions to the letter. Where we went wrong was in not keeping them

informed as to what we'd done."[18]

Thus the NMWA still rouses debate. Its political position remains liminal, secured without being secure, empowered but not powerful. The gender component of the NMWA's program had not become as neutral as its founders had hoped. Yet, for museums, the NMWA has made the charged issue of gender impossible for the profession to ignore.

Its museological policy is based on a few basic and easily translatable principles. The NMWA maintains that art by women has been ignored in the past and that it is unfairly represented today in museums, criticism, and art-history textbooks. "There is no such thing as women's art," says Wilhelmina Holladay. "Art is art, but there is art by women that is not recognized yet." Holladay, the principal spokesperson for the museum, is primarily concerned that women artists achieve equal status with men artists; beyond that, her plan involves no revisions. She characterizes the foundation of the museum as a "feminist act," but quickly adds, "We're doing it for women, so the adjective is suitable. But we've tried very hard not to talk about the inequities. We've decided that putting the accent on the achievements of women, on the positive, makes a better statement."[19] This cheery nonchalance about the "inequities" of gender positions has drawn the ire of many feminists who see the NMWA's attitude as naive, simply another example of the ghettoization of women artists, or as participating in masking ongoing societal "inequities" by glorifying a select canon of women.

There has been much debate over the very terms the museum uses to define art. One consequence was the change of the museum's name from its former title, the National Museum of Women's Art. What the NMWA means by both "women's art" and "women in the arts" is basically painting by women, supplemented to a lesser degree by sculpture, drawings, prints and crafts. As Holladay frequently explains, one of the museum's goals is to heighten awareness that "women have painted great paintings." This medium-specific bias is just one of the controversial positions inherited, unquestioned, from art history and incorporated into the museum's practices. Another is the concept of art as a series of "masterworks" by "great" artists.

The NMWA encodes its positions in a lavish catalogue made possible by grants from Philip Morris and the NEA. In this book, each "great" woman artist receives a monographic two-page spread, with an image of herself and one of her work. Artists who are deemed less great, such as Native American ceramicists, are grouped several to a page. Rather than challenge the hierarchies of quality, class and gender that underpin the perception of art, the NMWA's methodologies seem to be founded on them. Holladay reasons: "When masterful accomplishments and excellence are known, the right to be taken seriously surely will follow."[20] This disinclination to examine the canonical structures of art history ignores one of the principal tenets of feminist analysis and has been a source of criticism. But it may also explain why the museum as presently constituted has had such a widespread appeal.

View of permanent collection in third-floor galleries of the museum. Photo Gary T. Fleming.

Criticisms of the NMWA have also been widespread and to some degree predictable. Those commentators who are more conservative on gender issues than the NMWA leadership object to women's art being accorded museum status only because it is by women. This argument has two variants. Ultraconservatives argue that if women's art were of "museum quality" it would already be in museums, and, again on the issue of "quality," that the NMWA "sets a new low in abandoning even the pretense of adhering to an aesthetic standard."[21] Others who advocate this conservative line aver that women already receive equal, if not preferential, treatment in the art world. Robert Hughes claimed in *Time* that "no talented woman has real difficulty getting her work into a serious gallery."[22] And gallery owner Mary Boone adds that "art should be separate from sociology."[23]

A slightly more nuanced opinion holds that the NMWA is an awkward but necessary temporary measure, and that once the artistic excellence of women's art is recognized on the open esthetic marketplace then, as a critic for *Newsweek* predicts, "this museum would become obsolete."[24] Barbara Rose echoes this separate-on-the-road-to-equality stance, saying, "For women to achieve equality, the emphasis must be on quality, not gender. And please, could we leave the pots and quilts to the craft museum where they properly belong?"[25] For the most part, this position encourages women to work harder to try to achieve the level of accomplishment of male artists and to wait patiently until recognition comes on those terms.

Challenges have also come from artists, critics and theorists, who reject the NMWA's separateness as intrinsically demeaning. Norma Broude, co-editor of *Feminism and Art History*, states that a separate museum "trivializes the position of women as artists, reinforcing their artificial separateness and second-class status in a culture to which they have made central but unrecognized contributions."[26] Other feminists reject the NMWA's criteria for defining art by women as failing to acknowledge the complex cultural, sociological, psychological and even linguistic distinctions that position women in society. These critics identify the NMWA's definition of art as being fundamentally based on First World, white, bourgeois male terms. By denying the difference of women's art in a gendered culture, they argue, the NMWA ignores the realities of women's artistic production.

How could such criticisms be answered? One of the museum's stated purposes, often reiterated by Holladay, is to inspire future generations of women with the knowledge that no mainstream art museum today seeks to instill. For Holladay and the NMWA this recognition is in part bound up with success in the marketplace. Holladay feels, for instance, that one indicator of a new attitude toward women artists would be an increase in the prices of women's paintings; another would be the inclusion of more work by women in mainstream museums. Holladay notes with pride that these changes have already begun to take place; she cites the steep price recently fetched for a still life by Anne Vallayer-Coster, an 18th-century French painter, and the exhibitions in 1987 at the National Gallery of Berthe Morisot and Georgia O'Keeffe.[27]

But much more importantly, the NMWA's sense of itself comes from the response of its membership. This membership is not only enormous by American museum standards, it is extraordinarily committed. Along with the money which both wealthy and middle-income NMWA members have contributed comes their emotional and ideological support. The rhetoric of the NMWA brochures speaks of redemption

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SOME THINGS IN LIFE ARE SO SUPERB ONE IS COMPELLED TO BRING THEM TOGETHER.

Some men have the ability not only to embrace beauty, but to revel in it. They joyfully acknowledge that there is a particular pleasure in giving something rare and lovely. The rarest and loveliest object of all being a fine quality diamond of a carat or more.

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DIAMONDS AS EXCEPTIONAL AS THE WOMAN WHO WEARS THEM.

NEW YORK

Joel Shapiro at Paula Cooper

It seems that anyone who writes about Joel Shapiro is obliged to address the inadequacy of the Minimalist pigeonhole in which he is invariably placed. Many are tempted by some variation of the "Minimalism-made-human" formula, a characterization that underplays his Minimalism, implying that it is only the stylistic shell of what are actually comfortably traditional sculptural motives. But while it's true that Shapiro's work seems friendlier than, for instance, Judd's, we shouldn't miss the urgent tensions that animate it. It's not that Shapiro pulls Minimalism's teeth; it is, rather, that even as he retains Minimalism's obdurate insistence on extreme formal economy, he challenges it with other decidedly anti-Minimalist impulses toward figuration and emotional expression.

In his drawings, 23 large-scale examples of which were included in this show, Shapiro's tautly contradictory motives are visible, but in a form less compacted than in his sculpture. On paper, the austerity of geometric composition yields more to a luscious beauty of technique and material, a romantic fantasy of illusionistic space, and a playful vaudeville of figurative gesture. Take, for example, one of the show's more austere charcoal drawings, Untitled (1987): on first sight, it is a picture of uncompromising abstract severity, the field dominated by a monumental, crisply edged, velvety-black rectangle tilted so that its upper corners touch the top and left sides of the paper while its lower corner slips off the paper's bottom edge. There is in this work an icy perfection of Constructivist design, but a contradictory anthropomorphizing comedy, too—the big, black rectangle is seemingly being toppled by two small, brown rectangles, one shoving it at the top, the other tripping it at the ankles. The large form is like a father at play with his children. An irreverent buoyancy subverts an implacable formalism.

Representation is, of course, more pronounced in those drawings that relate to the abstracted, puppetlike figure sculptures Shapiro makes from rough, square-section beams of wood or cast metal. Like the sculptures, these two-dimensional figures dance, slump, exult and despair with an expressiveness that seems impossible given their reduced means. In one of the show's largest pieces, an untitled 88-by-60-inch work from 1988, a cavorting, kicking figure is discerned in the dynamic arrangement of five beams which progress radially, counterclockwise, from a vertical leg at the bottom to a thrusting diagonal—a joyfully outflung arm—at the upper left.

The figure drawings don't seem like studies for the sculptures, however. They are clearly independent works that, in some ways, tell more about the expressive drama and the activation of negative space that Shapiro aims for than do the sculptures. The drawings are more compellingly evocative, psychologically more charged. The surfaces surrounding the densely flat, sharply defined body parts are richly fingerprinted, smudged, smeared, erased and otherwise worked over, creating the flickering, impressionistic illusion of luminously atmospheric, emotionally saturated, mystical space. These are breathtakingly elegant pictures. If they are to be faulted for anything, it might be for this: the seductive, even ingratiating beauty that compromises the awkward, pugnaciously blunt dumbness that is the greatest strength of Shapiro's sculpture.

—Ken Johnson

Joel Shapiro: Untitled, 1987, charcoal, chalk and pastel on paper, 77 by 59 inches; at Paula Cooper.

David Diao: *Seal/Zeal,* 1987, mixed mediums, 84 inches square; at Postmasters.

David Diao at Postmasters

Some viewers must wonder whether David Diao's art amounts to much more than an erudite parlor game, so much are his paintings involved in references to and quotations from early 20th-century abstraction. Walking through this exhibition, you may recognize Malevich's red and black squares supplying Diao with the image for *Art and Design*, or Mondrian's signature initials along with De Stijl and Bauhaus emblems among the less familiar symbols distributed about the pale gray surface of *Monograms I*. And, after studying the arrangement of multicolored rectangles on a blue field in *De Stijl-Life*, you may recognize the abbreviated image of a Rietveld chair, though perhaps not the ice

skater image borrowed from a De Stijl designer named Huszar.

If you're not well schooled in Constructivism's history, you will find yourself scratching your head over many foreign words and symbols. And you may begin to wonder what the purpose of this exercise in art-historical Trivial Pursuit is, even as you admit that Diao's moderately scaled acrylic paintings are exceedingly handsome objects. (He squeegees on paint and letters typography with a loving, craftsman-like touch, and he demonstrates a perfect-pitch sense of design.)

Clearly, there is some kind of semiological point being made, something about modern painting being not an unmediated expression but a linguistic exercise in signification, a pastiche of ready-made signifiers. But another level in Diao's art is suggested by the appearance of Oriental pictographs in some paintings and by the title—*China*—of yet another. Diao was born in China, and an element of autobiography, however enigmatic, appears to be at work here. In *Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom* (as was explained to me by gallery personnel), a symbol of liberation that was current during a short-lived political thaw in China in the 1950s appears amongst titles from similarly short-lived early modernist revolutionary publications. One senses Diao is struggling with his personal relationship to his own cultural roots as well as to the modernist European art tradition.

In the early 1980s, Diao went through such a crisis of confidence about the formalism he'd practiced successfully for a decade that he quit painting altogether for several years. When he returned to painting with a series based on the famous photograph of Malevich's "The Last Futurist Exhibition," it seemed he'd freed himself from his enthrallment to Constructivism and could now look back on its touchingly naive utopianism with an ironic, albeit nostalgic eye.

Yet in this show, a painting like *Seal/Zeal* suggests that the issues are not so neatly settled for Diao. Within a seven-foot square, in black, vertically elongated, mechanical letters, the Russian word for Constructivism is superimposed over an irregular red oval within which Chinese characters spell the artist's name. In effect, the cagelike structure of the Russian word is shown to imprison and repress Diao himself. It seems he is still looking for a way to project his own personal identity against the imperatives of intellectualism and formalist tradition; consequently, the severely attenuated, almost imperceptible expressive impulse encoded in his art is at once touching and frustrating. You can't help wishing Diao would risk a little more self-exposure.

—Ken Johnson

Georg Baselitz: *B für Larry*, 1967, oil on canvas, 98 by 78¾ inches; at Mary Boone.

Georg Baselitz at Mary Boone

This exhibition of early work, spanning the years 1964 to '78, during which the artist developed and refined his mature style, had a power that reminded us why Baselitz's work seemed a revelation when it burst on the American art scene less than a decade ago. The earliest piece on display, a small painting from 1964, was a surprise. Representing a bottom-lit head rising from an attenuated neck, the work's intensity brings to mind the anguished creatures in the paintings of Munch. But this was the only unfractured, upright image in the show. Baselitz's subsequent evolution, as presented here, took the artist through a series of experiments with the disruption and fragmentation of the painted image which culminated in his now well-established trademark inversions.

There is a violent edge to these experiments which is enhanced by the fact that the images torn asunder, sliced lengthwise or abruptly rotated in space represent vaguely ominous muscular hero-types lurking in sylvan glades. These paintings also chronicle the development of Baselitz's Neo-Expressionist brushwork. Strokes become heavy and broad—one can almost feel the brush drawn sluggishly through the thick paint—an effect that heightens the general air of mute struggle that pervades these works.

The paintings from 1967 show Baselitz dividing and rupturing his images. In *Kullervos Fusse*, he breaks a barefoot figure and his dog into a set of horizontal zones, distorting them in such a way that the possibility of coherent reassembly seems remote. In *B für Larry*, a figure and several dogs are shredded and reshuffled so that patches of blue sky are interspersed with solid forms like mismatched pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Waldarbeiter, 1968, offers a new twist on the discontinuous image. Here a figure ripped in two is turned sideways against a massive upright tree trunk, the two halves of the figure fluttering in the wind like ragged flags. The 1969 painting *Der Mann am Baum* was the first inverted figure in the Boone show and presents a bare-chested Bacchus-like youth planted firmly on a ground that looms high above his head. All the later paintings in the exhibition contain inverted images, though by the mid-'70s, many have become so abstract and loosely painted that they are very difficult to read. In this respect, an eagle from 1977 contrasts sharply with one from 1972. The earlier one, though painted with a rich tangle of short strokes, is clearly recognizable, while the later one offers a massing of darks and lights in which the creature's black silhouette is barely discernible.

According to statements by the artist, these destructured images came out of his need to reconcile a figural content with the abstraction dominating art during the period in which he came of age as an artist. At their best—and there were many fine works in this show—Baselitz's paintings exhibit a productive tension between an image struggling to come into being and the agitated brushstrokes and formal disruptions that threaten to obliterate it. In the hunger for myth-making that characterized the early '80s, this tension was interpreted as a metaphor for the German struggle with history, a case that now seems somewhat overstated.

Today, Baselitz is known as the maker of the upside-down images, a device that more often than not in his later works has come to seem something of a gimmick. This exhibition of early paintings was ironically Baselitz's best New York show in recent years, revealing the power of his work when his struggle with the image was still fresh.

—Eleanor Heartney

James Welling at Christine Burgin

James Welling's photographs are both beautiful and "beautiful," romantic and ironic. He has worked in the high modernist mode of Weston, Steichen et al., finding abstract/metaphoric revelation in loving scrutiny of the ordinary: dramatically lit drapery, wrinkled aluminum foil and globs of Jell-O. Yet at the same time, he has persistently foregrounded the beautification effect itself so as to call attention—as do such other postmodern photographers as Cindy Sherman or Frank Majore—to the means by which photography utilizes its own built-in allure even as it projects that allure which it so seductively represents.

These opposed impulses in Welling's work generate not so much a sense of tension as a synergistic resonance, typically compressed into an extreme reticence of format. As a result, though only six 24-by-20-inch Polacolor prints were included in this exhibition, the gallery space felt compellingly charged. It was as much a Minimalist installation as a traditional photography show.

The prints were hung on opposite walls in two groups. On one wall was a pair of nearly identical images that seemed to depict virtually nothing at all: a light-struck void fading from a softly glowing beige band to dark brown shadows at top and bottom. In fact, these were pictures of a commercial photographer's paper backdrop. The lush prints were presented in simple, wide frames, the natural wood color of which matched the internal hue of the light.

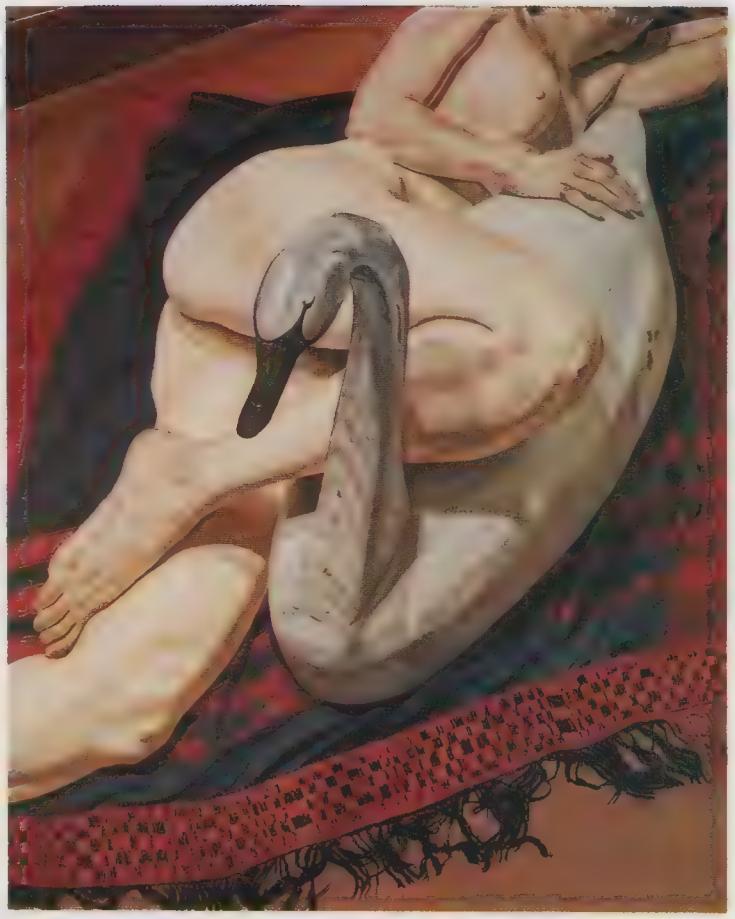
The other four photographs, all hung close together in the middle of the same wall, depicted heavy, satiny brown fabric draped in various disheveled arrangements of folds and curves. These prints were also packaged in simple, perfectly crafted wood frames that echoed the richness of the fabric in their deep mahogany colors.

At first there may appear to be little more to these images than a beautiful emptiness. Indeed, it seems that, at least in part, Welling wants us to think of them as archetypal photographic commodities; hence the backdrop material designed to create the ideal, "classic" atmosphere in which to set and promote desirable objects; and the slightly kitschy frames, which suggest decorative luxury.

But while this subtle edge of deconstructive irony persists in the work, it doesn't prevent these six photographs from generating a flood of other ideas, feelings and associations. In a statement prepared for the show, Welling himself tells of the poetic sense he wants to evoke "of all the things drapery connotes, a feeling of mortality, of elegy and also of sails, flags, bunting. . . ." And indeed these drapery studies do project a feeling of nostalgia and history, of things lost but not forgotten. The warmly mellowed woodiness of the frames calls to mind a pre-modern world "of Brown Decade interiors. . . ," as Welling writes, "of brick factories, of railroads."

Moreover, out of the cross-gallery dialogue between the drapery pictures and the luminous paper backdrop images, there emerged a metaphysical dimension best couched in terms of dualities: dark/light, fullness/emptiness, earth/air, gravity/weightlessness, structure/space, matter/spirit. This play of alternating universals worked on you relentlessly—though perhaps subliminally—as you stood between the two sets of pictures. There was something quietly somber yet spiritually exhilarating about the way this show unfolded. As much as a gratifying photographic exhibition it was a strangely moving, even mystical theatrical experience.

—Ken Johnson



Philip Pearlstein: *Model/Swan Decoy*, 1987, oil on canvas, 60 by 48 inches; at Hirschl & Adler Modern.

Philip Pearlstein at Hirschl & Adler Modern

With abstraction increasingly besieged by theory, it may be that figuration—at least as Philip Pearlstein uses it—is formalism's last refuge. For 30 years now, he has been testing the strengths of two-dimensional composition against the attractions of the flesh, and composition has never given in. Pearlstein's canvases are replete with massive bodies, mostly female, rendered irrecoverably inert. His trademark accentuation of shadows and reflected light on skin, his exaggeration of bone structure and even-handed treatment of surface incident, weave a seamless fabric of *stuff*, all of equal luster. Hair is without highlights, as are eyes, which are either averted and dull or, more often, closed. Indeed, faces are often cropped out of the picture. Poses are natural without being psychologically significant. Nor is the paint itself handled with special interest; just enough of it is used to do the job, and this, especially on the figures, is not much. What we are left with is the relationship of one contour to the next, a counterpoint of pattern, volume, weight and, increasingly, color that at its best is as satisfying as a Baroque fugue.

In fact, Pearlstein is sure enough of his victory over emotional engagement to make its conquest a subject. Several of the paintings in this recent show introduce marionettes or wooden mannequin figures, posed sometimes literally arm-in-arm with the living models and rendered with equal emphasis. In one canvas, a cropped nude is shown with an arm raised in imitation of a minstrel marionette; in another, two marionettes upstage a model whose elbow and knee are lifted onto furniture in positions suggesting the pull of an unseen puppeteer's strings. Other props include a shoeshine stool and a dental chair, the former evoking a prosthetic device, the latter perhaps a joking reference to the artist's "clinical" sensibility. A frameless mirror leaning against a wall gives us what we might at first fail to register as the reflected, frontal image of a model also shown from behind: both the reflection and the "real" woman have been painted with the same touch. Colored, highly patterned cloth—rugs, spreads, a kimono, a cushion—is rendered with particular brilliance, eclipsing the limited range of skin tones. All of these devices—familiar to Pearlstein and to modernist figuration—corroborate the merely material status of the mostly female subjects, denying their human presence.

And, indeed, these women, whose fatigue (or is it resentment?) is evident, *are* being treated as objects. If, as some would have it, all art is political, then Pearlstein's subject matter, and his treatment of it, are political choices. Of course, to speak of his work in these terms is to violate formalist dogma. The artist himself doesn't seem to care either way. What remains interesting is the paintings' faintly transgressive air, as if, resident in

James Welling: *XVI*, 1987, Polacolor print, 24 by 20 inches; at Christine Burgin (review on page 135).

Scot Borofsky: *Sister Buddha*, 1988, enamel on linen, 58 by 48 inches; at Mokotoff.

the laboratory of purely visual logic, Pearlstein still kept the door ajar. *—Nancy Princenthal*

Scot Borofsky at Mokotoff

East Village romanticism, despite advance death notices, re-emerged in thoughtful and serious terms in Scot Borofsky's show of 13 paintings in commercial spraypaint enamel on Belgian linen. The choice of this Krylon palette recalls the art of early 1980s subcultures—Hispanic muralists of the Lower East Side and the graffiti writers of the IRT Lexington Avenue line. Yet Borofsky's chosen subjects—electrically charged landscapes, mystical visions, pyramids, Buddhas and other sacred symbols—have their historical roots elsewhere, in the art of ancient Greek, Asian and Latin American peoples. His use of esoteric symbols, often floating in abstracted landscape-like fields, recalls work done earlier in this century by "primitive" visionary painters such as Forrest Bess. The result is a culturally and historically hybrid style that is slightly goofy and certainly unexpected.

The smaller, more loosely painted representational paintings have a freedom of line and the fresh quality of ideas executed quickly and assuredly, combining sprayed field, line and stencil. In *Vision in Ohio*, an artificially symmetrical and foreshortened landscape, a yellow-and-gray striped road bisects two looming green fluorescent hills. Above, centered in a sky of blazing orange and red, a silver flying saucer hovers (Borofsky claims to have actually witnessed this event). Here, as in many of the paintings, depiction is reduced to diagrammatic terms, and the spatial reading comes as much from Eastern painting styles as Western ones. *Christmas Mountain* has a yellow step pyramid rising to meet a floating cross, both shrouded in dark mist. The simplest piece in the show, the line seems to burn into the face of the canvas, searing the image upon the viewer's retina.

In the larger, more ambitious works, the spray becomes gauzy and atmospheric, the drips and splatters endemic to the medium effectively exploited to create stormlike grounds. In *Lotus and Diamond*, the enamel is built up into a heavy field of royal blue and forest green, creating a dense veil through which the mystical emblems shine. The lotus, oddly resembling the old NBC television peacock logo, is stenciled in "optical" orange, floating over a misty blob of pink and magenta.

Buddha of the Golden Rope has the sitting Buddha figure reduced to pure armature, glowing yellow amid dark, forbidding foothills. The Buddha appears radioactive in the midst of a landscape of toxic waste, suggesting the dominance of divine presence over poisoned culture. More direct, and very effective, is *Sister Buddha*, a close-up of a female Buddha face, rendered in simple Matisse-like contour, her head outlined in green, her features in white. The woman's eyes are cast downward, conveying tenderness and a quiet sense of contemplation. On prolonged viewing, the atmospheric activity of the salmon pink background becomes increasingly apparent; the concentric circles sprayed to fill around her features intensify, creating a sense of unrest or disturbance. Like all Borofsky's subjects, and the medium in which he paints them, the Buddha head acts as an emblematic reduction of mysticism, customized for a New Age audience.

—John Zinsser

Günther Förg at Luhring, Augustine & Hodes

Earlier in the season we had seen some work by this young German artist in a group show: small rectangular monochromatic paintings executed on sheets of lead "stretched" over the sort of wooden supports usually reserved for canvas. Almost half the pieces in his solo debut in the spring were in the same format though on a larger scale and more elaborately configured. Here the vertical panels looked to have been laid on their sides and stacked up to form triptychs, or hung separate on the wall to serve as interactive components of a single piece. Each was covered in a wash of monochromatic enamel paint, the colors themselves being "off" choices made even odder by their mutual resistance: a square of oxblood brown, for example, faced another of a dank, unresponsive forest green. While brighter colors occurred—a wan yellow here, a soiled-looking sky-blue there—the charmless shades of municipal "touch-up" paint jobs seemed to serve as the chromatic models, and they were enlivened only by the humorous resemblance of the dented metal surfaces to inexpertly stretched canvases.

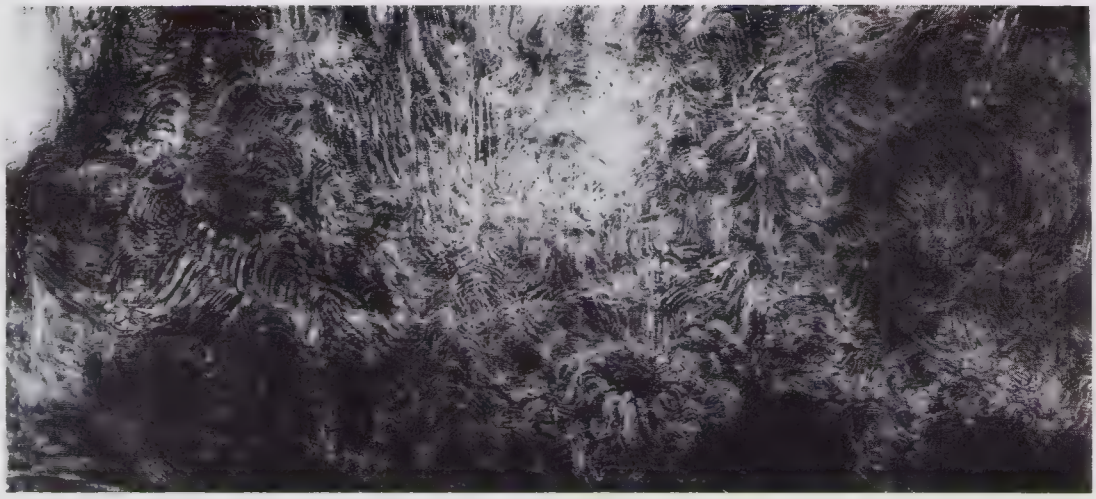
One had an idea of what Förg was up to—deprogramming abstract painting of the grandiosities of both formalism and "content"—but this kind of revisionist strategy is a narrow one and a bit oversubscribed of late. (Perhaps Förg thinks so too: according to his gallery these "lead paintings" will be the last of this kind that he will do.) The real interest here rested in the ambivalent metaphorical statement suggested by the lead ground: the painting surface became armorlike, though whether protecting spiritual riches or concealing a lack thereof was left to guess.

Two other paintings offered a visually livelier variation on these materials and format: they were made of sheets of copper marked with passages of scratches and incisions. Light-colored paint (pumpkin orange or white-blue) ran down the surfaces in rivulets that channeled around the scarred sections, leaving the copper surface at that point visible. The results had something like the optical charge of Fontana's punctured and sliced canvases, plus an imbedded dynamic element: over time the copper will oxidize, so the color combinations that we see now will gradually change. If the lead paintings adopted a stance of conceptual indeterminacy, the copper pieces were designed as perpetual works-in-progress.

Perhaps the most interesting works in the show—not least because of a developmental potential they suggested—were the bronze reliefs. Cast from clay molds, these ponderous wall-dependent pieces (the largest weighed 800 pounds) were referentially complex. Each was a large rectangular field of dense,

raw-looking abstract texture which suggested at once tormented Rodinesque musculature, painterly impasto, and beds of frozen plowed-up earth with, in some cases, what looked like the drag-marks of hands running their whole length. The sculpture seemed to have issued from a world far removed from the calculated diffidence of the lead paintings, yet the distance was not so great after all. The paintings showed pigment swabbed over a poreless, unreceptive surface; the sculptures gave us expressive movement interrupted and trapped in matter forever. In the one the paint cannot get in; in the other passion cannot get out. Together in this show they defined the poetry of incompletion and irresolution that lies at the heart of Förg's work.

—Holland Cotter



Nachume Miller: *Landscape No. 18*, 1987, oil, wax and silver on canvas, 77 by 168 inches; at Exit Art.

Nachume Miller at Exit Art

In the postmodern era, the notion of the sublime has fallen rather out of fashion. Primordial terrors, religious awe and assertions of human insignificance before omnipotent nature do not sit well with a generation of artists trained to regard the transcendental as just so much soft-headed mush. Even our apocalypses are tongue-in-cheek—one thinks of recent works by Robert Morris, Cindy Sherman and Robert Longo in which visions of the ultimate disaster are full of knowing reference to high and popular culture.

So it is something of a surprise to come upon the paintings of Nachume Miller, whose turbulent works summon up the spirit of such disparate masters of "the End" as Leonardo da Vinci, Dürer, Goya, Turner and Gustave Moreau, while never succumbing to the lure of pastiche or simple appropriation. Instead, Miller reinfuses conviction into the Romantic vision of the tragic fragility of the human order.

The paintings and drawings included in this exhibition spanned the years 1984–88, and reveal Miller's development from a rather clichéd symbolism to his current powerfully suggestive near-abstractions. The earliest works feature disembodied heads, either paired against dark grounds or presented as monumental icons resting on desolate landscapes before crowds of Lilliputian onlookers. Both style and subject matter suggest the 19th-century fancy for emblems of civilization's decline. In the most recent paintings, the figures have become little more than tiny shadows set at the edge of vast displays of dematerialized volcanic energy. Whorling patterns of whiplash lines, reminiscent of Pollock's drips, tumble across the canvas, their direction and emphasis sometimes undercut by furrows of encaustic buildup. Miller often employs metallic paint which flickers through the pervasive darkness, or spills unchecked over the bundles of lines. The blazing yellow center of one painting recalls the blinding light of Turner's last works.

There is little conventional space. Instead, the choked surfaces suggest the revolt of the elements: torrents of rain, surging whirlpools, squalling gales, dancing flames. Evoking the primordial or post-apocalyptic landscape, these paintings offer a prospect that is at once terrifying and oddly exhilarating. One reason the works succeed, where efforts by other contemporary artists have fallen flat, is that they lack deliberate specificity. Recent films devoted to showing us a world in the throes or aftermath of nuclear holocaust have demonstrated that to picture the unthinkable is somehow to tame it. Miller's paintings are just indefinite enough to remain powerfully evocative. *—Eleanor Heartney*

Günther Förg: *Bronze Relief*, 1988, bronze, 78¾ by 51¼ by 6 inches; at Luhring, Augustine & Hodes.

Minoru Kawabata at Jack Tilton

To a degree unusual for him, Minoru Kawabata has let a single, delicately modulated color take over the whole background in each of these recent paintings. That decision, combined with the discreet, ethereal manner in which he has brushed in the other abstract forms, has gained him a profoundly new spatial sense. The background color has taken on the aspect of space itself: instead of merely being a surface against which images play, it acts as a medium in which forms appear submerged.

Consider *Image from Red Gate*: black, blue and red scrawls dangle limply as if suspended in a bright orange solution. There is a sense of weightlessness, of forms slowly rising or falling. These ragged, wispy tendrils of color have a thin, unsubstantial look, swirling and clinging in tangled disarray like some exotic underwater algae or seaweed. In *Image from Yellow Robe* a collection of red, black and ocher forms are drenched in the blazing yel-

Minoru Kawabata: *Image from Red Gate*, 1987, acrylic on canvas, 84 by 66 inches; at Jack Tilton.

Mark Leithauser: *Gill's Tree*, 1984, oil on canvas, 6½ by 3⅝ inches; at Coe Kerr.

low field that surrounds them. This lemony expanse has already absorbed one element and is about to soak up the others, creating a drama of immersion.

When the forms within the painting are not dissolving or in a late state of decomposition, they retain the gauzy thinness of fine silk or linen. In *Image from Blue Robe (A)*, a broad plane of some darkened cerulean or cobalt fills most of the canvas. Streaks and stains appear to be working through the gossamer surface, causing a delicate translucency. This transformational process is more advanced in *Image from Black on Orange*, the edges of the forms more ragged and eaten into. The hot orange background is like a sheet of fire, and we are invited to view the blackened forms in the instant before they ignite.

For all that seems ephemeral in these works, one can still speak of the architecture of the paintings. The compositions are articulated with great finesse, every stroke finding a necessary place in the whole. Throughout this series, the cluster of forms unfolds or hangs from either the top or the sides of the canvases, or peels off from a thin vertical or diagonal armature of paint.

This Japanese/American artist has the rare ability to combine the sensibilities of his native and his chosen cultures. In Kawabata's hands, Abstract-Expressionist tendencies consort in perfect ease with Oriental themes of robes and gates. Certain cursive elements in his compositions suggest Japanese writing, but these are not obtrusive, and can, in fact, be seen as purely organic emanations. Most of all, Kawabata's Asian heritage allows him to infuse his Western sources with a subtle sense of the processes of nature: ever interacting, ever changing.

—Walter Thompson

Mark Leithauser at Coe Kerr

Mark Leithauser's etchings recall those of Dürer and Rembrandt. Executed in the 1970s and early '80s, they smack of the North country and the Northern imagination. In *The Journey is the Teacher*, 1973, two huge, scabrous trees loom over a conflation of vines and thickets in which gnomelike creatures can be seen. *Horological Fascination*, 1974, is more explicit in its fantasizing: in this diptych we see, to the left, a wizened clockmaker fashioning a stone troll amidst tools and clockworks and, to the right, knavish statues-with-hammers of the sort you'd find on the tower of a late Renaissance town hall, happily banging out the hour. If these prints are reminiscent of the old masters, later ones seem outright adaptations. *Birches*, 1980, is an even denser, Bresdinesque rendering of the interior of some unenchanted American forest re-enchanted by the European-tending artist's slightly febrile imagination.

Old masterism from a 38-year-old native of Detroit? It's a mannerism, really, but one that serves Leithauser well in his impressive prints and in some undeniably beautiful silverpoint drawings of a potting shed, a stone garden lion, flowers, trees and other subjects. What's less exciting is the artist's application of this tradition-soaked technique and ethos to oil painting, which he took up in 1984. The paintings are mostly small, miniaturistic in effect, yet all strain Leithauser's retrograde estheticizing to the breaking point. *Anna's Paper Doll*, 1987, is typical: a spongeware jar holding brushes and etching and silverpoint tools is set next to a narrow, folding purple trellis (part of an antique model for a fire-fighting device) to the left and, unfortunately, a kitschy paper doll of a startled little girl to the right. *The Blue Dragon*, 1985, is another mini-sized work that incorporates a blue Chinese dragon decal, a toy tank and dark pink firecrackers bursting their wrapper at bottom. As *The New Yorker* has said for many years of the Off-Broadway show *The Fantastiks*, "the whimsy is as thick as *that*."

In his oils, Leithauser is just a little to the right of Andrew Wyeth—with all the artistic perils that involves. My favorites of Leithauser's paintings are those in which he sticks closest to the more straightforward subject matter of the prints and drawings. *Peel with Geranium*, 1987, is a small essay in the manner of 17th-century Dutch still lifes on the homely beauties of that plant in a red clay pot against a deep turquoise background. Even more authentically felt are *March*, 1986, a small horizontal section of an old bare hulk of a tree against a light blue sky, and *August Vine*, also 1986, a study of what seems to be a part of that same old tree, with a leafy plant making its merry way up the trunk. Leithauser is at every point facile in technique and color; and when not busy being too literal or too cute, he can be genuinely poetic.

—Gerrit Henry

Ford Crull at M-13

At 35, Ford Crull is one of the most enterprising and energetic of our crop of youngish New York painters. Crull's explosive, scattershot style is refreshingly primitive, unpremeditated and dynamic. Critics have compared his work to that of Klimt, Klee, Gorky, Kenny Scharf and others, and these may well be significant influences. Paradoxically, what is most likable about Crull's flagrancy-in-paint is its screaming anonymity, its allover dissemination of figure and narrative into color and brushstroke. Crull is an authentically *wild* painter, as brazen, almost, as Picasso in some of his late outings.

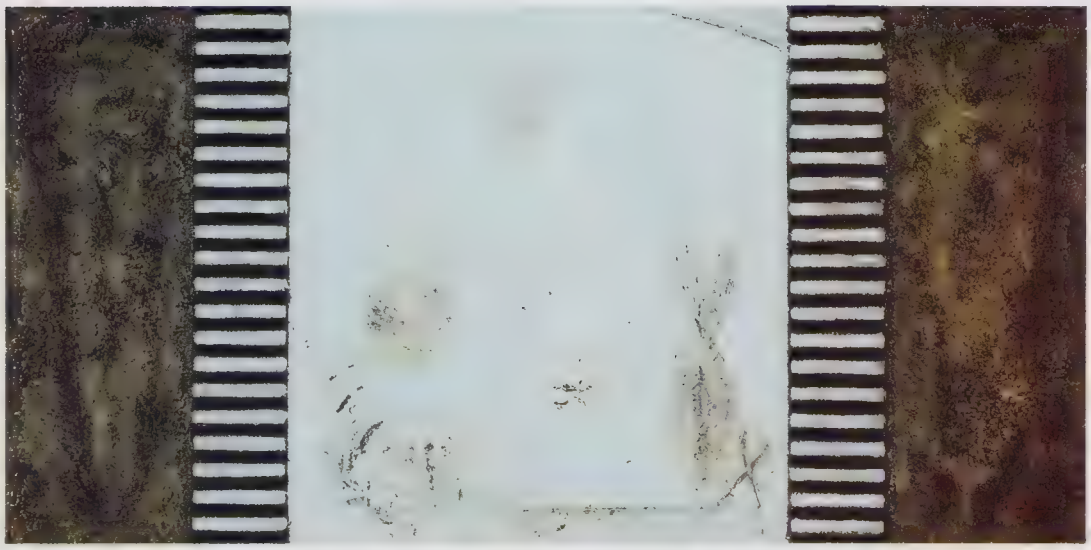
The works—mostly diptychs, most of them man-sized or larger—contain a figuration that seems to be there on the condition of its very spuriousness—as a vibrant foil to the rules of modernism. In the oil and oil-stick *Elegy* we see, in the left panel, a male figure with legs and backside of scumbled blues, reds and purples, his chalky white torso

ending in a head with a Mohawk sort of haircut that could just as well be a projection of the figure's psyche. A weird kind of toadstool and a multihued projectile offset the figure's back-cum-chest with its coils of color and a blue cross over a red heart. The right panel looks like a shattered stained-glass window. The figure here—indicated by a pair of searching eyes and vague nose and mouth—is almost incidental to the flying panes of red and slithering shards of aqua, blue and yellow—and, again, a heart, this one in turquoise and lavender, lying on its side.

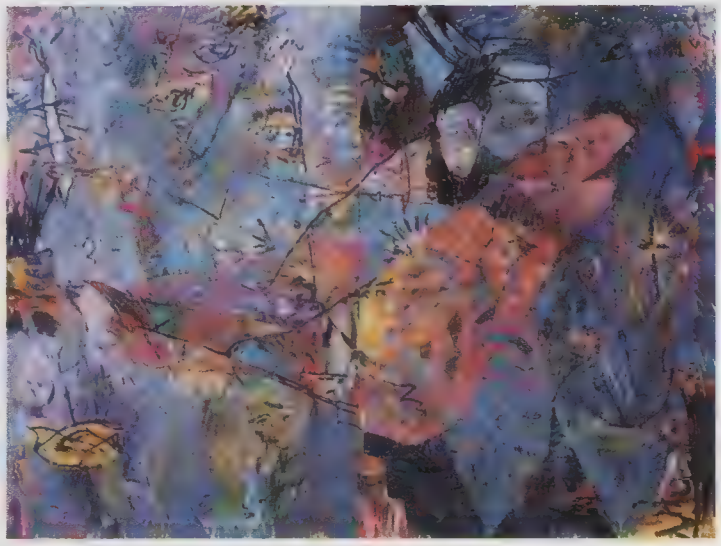
No more—or less—control is exerted in the huge *Orpheus Rising*. Here, in the left panel, a kind of demonic genie—Orpheus, we assume—"rises" out of paint-besmirched mists. In the right panel, all manner of hot reds and cold blues take ambiguous form, suggesting a kind of multifold underworld of the painterly psyche. Is that the fire-breathing dragon of hell we see in the foreground? And is Eurydice present in this fragmented paintscape? Crull subsumes such questions of narrative in his charged response to the myth.

Crull makes some Neo-Expressionists look like featherbedders. Indeed, his painting seems to have come more directly out of the work of Pollock and, especially, de Kooning—from an inherently American style of painting that implodes upon itself just as the viewer is beginning to think he understands it. If Crull is more figuratively specific than most of the Action Painters, it's because the battles of abstractionism have been won, and imagism may be the last frontier.

—Gerrit Henry



Mary Hambleton: *Vanishing Garden*, 1987, oil on canvas, 21 by 42 inches; at Pamela Auchincloss.



Ford Crull: *Orpheus Rising*, 1987, oil on canvas, 60 by 80 inches; at M-13.

Mary Hambleton at Pamela Auchincloss

Like many young artists today, Mary Hambleton is interested in science and technology and their relationship to contemporary culture. She does not, however, have the usual dystopic view of technology's incursions into our daily life. Rather, Hambleton is fascinated with technology's ability to extend access to both the microcosm and the macrocosm, and to make the past and future available to the present. For her, science is a tool to decipher the mysteries of our origin, and it takes on an almost mystical resonance.

Hambleton's paintings, seen here in her first solo show, are not done in a high-tech, Neo-Geo style; nor do they make explicit reference to the technological or the scientific. In style, they seem to owe the most to the example of Bill Jensen. Like Jensen's, Hambleton's paintings have rich, earthy colors, encrusted surfaces and organic imagery. And there is in these works, as in Jensen's, an affinity with the work of Dove and Hartley, in which spiritual content is evoked by reference to natural forms and energies. The spiritual aspect of the natural is further emphasized in Hambleton's work by her use of such compositional elements as arches and other hierarchical divisions that recall Renaissance altarpieces, as well as her penchant for titles referring to religious themes. Such spiritual content—perhaps more accurately described as an allusion to inexplicable sources of meaning—is formally incorporated into a geometric structure that divides her paintings into different fields of space.

Vanishing Garden, for example, is divided into five sections. The large, predominantly white area in the center contains vaguely naturalistic forms etched into the surface, and is bordered on each side by series of bold black-and-white stripes. The outer sections are both built up of layers of color, within which hover amorphous shapes. A sense of vastness is conveyed in the scale of the painting, which contrasts the expansive, full space at the borders with the contained, though slightly voidlike area at the center. Paradoxically, the outer vastness appears close, the central field more distant, yet the painting is a unified whole. Such formal maneuvers provide the context for the apprehension of Hambleton's spiritual concerns and notions of a space-time continuum. These paintings are not finally religious or scientific, but they do invite contemplation of the mysteries and complexities of our universe. *—Tiffany Bell*

Tina Barney at John Good

Tina Barney makes what used to be called conversation pieces; her large color photographs of well-heeled family scenes have some of the hand-me-down baroque splendor of a Rhode Island Reynolds. No question but that her subjects actually own the Toulouse-Lautrecs and Picassos on the walls, yet Barney has a way of making the possessions look jarring and the people's nerves seem jangled. Here are endless mother-adolescent daughter confrontations, awkward and ephebic teenage sons, ickball fathers making peace with their Lolita daughters. Barney could be called the David Lynch of Watch Hill (where she summers); like *Blue Velvet*, her photographs fascinate even as they repel, and their conspicuously consumptive focus on still-life details seems to bespeak a devotion to unvarnished *vanitas*.

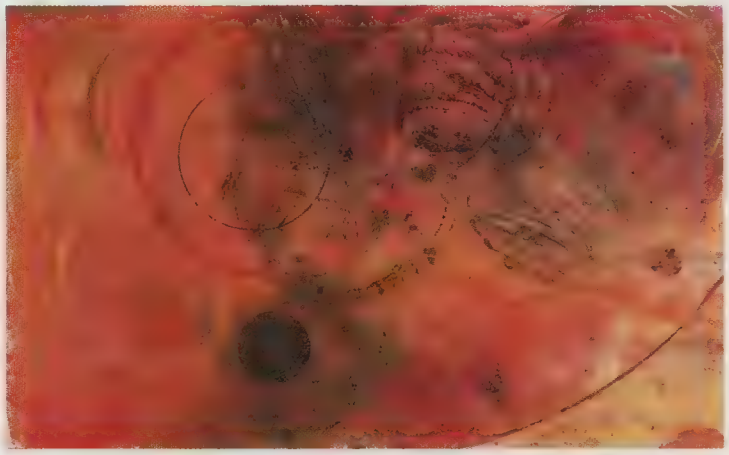
The best 1987 work concentrates on standoffs between two

people. With *Sheila and Moya*, it appears to be a mother and daughter talking in the daughter's bedroom: everything from the swagged white curtain down to the scalloped pillowcase could be taken as a metaphor for pristine womanhood; the girl's book is even open to a chapter titled "English Country Style in Practice." Yet there are also unpleasant overtones of mother-daughter competition—a veritable battle of eyebrows and cracking of knuckles that suggests an "Oh Mom, stop bugging me" scenario. This kind of bizarre sign language becomes even more pronounced in *Jill and Polly in the Bathroom*, where the artist's older sister Jill and Jill's daughter Polly are caught wearing similar pink bathrobes but looking very different. The daughter (whom Barney recently photographed for the cover of *Connoisseur* modeling Issey Miyake) is all ripe, unrepentant flesh, while the mother, with her hand-on-hip gesture and modified harlequin glasses, is a study in chic hysteria; in this instance she also seems fed up with sis the photographer. Throughout the photo there are wonderful still-life details, like the broken china soap dish (some things are just too good to throw away) as well as the view through a ludicrously fancy chintz curtain to a little white doghouse, which may perhaps be read as a metaphor for the daughter's predicament.

With her photographs of twosomes, Barney succeeds in keeping the tension at a fever pitch; only with her larger group scenes do the effects get somewhat dispersed. In *Marina's Room*, a father seems to be making a gift of a new straw hat to his little girl while a doll-like second daughter measures ribbons in the background; needless to say, the closets and shelves are already stuffed with belongings, and Marina looks anything but pleased with Daddy's present. In *The Son*, the issue seems to be whether an adolescent will have his portrait painted by his father (realist Gorgi Daskaloff); the mother watches nervously, and Barney gets them all in what is surely the most awkward of family moments. Yet the photographer seems to cherish these traces of discomfiture, and in *Phil's Barbecue* she captures her own son bare-chested and looking like quite a hunk next to his grandmother. Here, too, is another one of those figures who almost seem to function as Barney's conscience—a preppy teenage girl staring out at the camera, as if about to say, "Tina, get the hell out of here."

—Brooks Adams

Tina Barney: *Sheila and Moya*, 1987, color photograph, 30 by 40 inches; at John Good.



Pat Adams: *Interstitial*, 1987, oil and mixed mediums on linen, 80 by 131½ inches; at Zabriskie.

Pat Adams at Zabriskie

The viewer has a party gazing at these canvases, works on paper and monoprints by Pat Adams. This is such Aquarian art, with Adams's endless circles on fields of color evoking a wide range of references, both fantastic and historical. I found myself recalling an image from *The Lost Weekend*: a skein of wet circles on a bar made by the whiskey glasses of time past and present. It's hard to occupy the nexus of inner and outer space simultaneously, yet that is precisely the way this painting seems to exist. And Adams brightly illustrates her esthetic position by opening her jewelry box of imagery in a slow tease, so slow that the world seems to have stopped moving.

Every painting, large and small, is a mosaic of darkened nickels, red dots, sunspots, small breathing edges of paint, faded gold—the multitudinous possibilities of time pulsating and falling into a system and out (Adams is a serialist). The surfaces of these pieces run into each other, the materials skillfully yapping at each other. There is a Yeatsian turning to all her shapes, a slow circumnavigation through an inventory of configurations. This is meticulous work whose references ultimately are outside of culture—an efficacious place to be at this glutted point in the century when most of us would rather be pillars of salt or Toulouse-Lautrec.

This is art committed to taking a leap, yet we are often caught in the artist's mortuary of choices, a solemn breaking-down of matter that sometimes feels greedy and too slow. *Penser du Corps* is unquestionably the best piece in the show and yet I don't like it (it's not a work designed to give pleasure—none of her work is, really). I find it adamantly philosophical. Two huge globes, gold and purple, one made of chips of metallic heaven, the other its canary shadow, hang so close and painfully still, in made space, that one could scream. Unless you can settle down and watch. By suggesting that this work is "the best," I suppose I'm implying that it's better than me. *Penser du Corps* is the culmination of most of the work shown, yet I don't have the nerve for this portion of Adams's experience.

One large painting, *Interstitial*, the joystick of the show, claims the redeeming grace of wisdom. There's such carnival abandon in this big ruddy canvas; here's where the rings from the wet glasses appear, as well as streamers and other festive shapes, all worked over in Adams's painstaking style. Adams is a diarist, and often we don't want to understand the prison of time as intimately as she suggests. In *Interstitial* she has a different, equally private message to relay: it's the contagion of joy that's cosmic.

A series of small monoprints, the most recent work in this show, succeed consistently at levels that only the best canvases approach. Shiny iron filings form shapes that are spherical, angelic and fishlike; overlapping, inhabiting blank white paper, they seem to beg to be freed from the page. The tension harnessed or imploded in the larger works is miraculously contained here in small dynamic shapes, each a triumph of design and philosophy.

—Eileen Myles

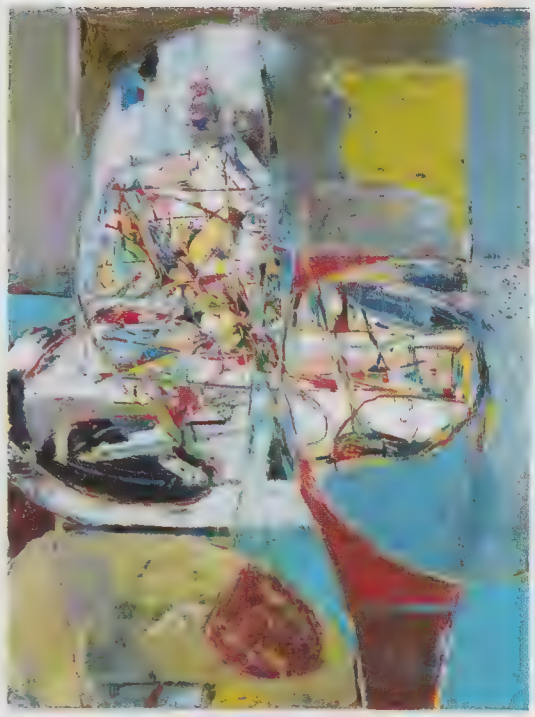
Deborah Kahn at Bowery Gallery

The paintings seen in Deborah Kahn's recent one-person show—her first in New York—are complex, semi-abstract interiors that combine detailed still-life and figurative references with areas of shimmering reflected light and matte expanses of wall or table. Kahn, now in her 30s and at one time a student of Al Held

at Yale, uses discrete, clean-edged forms and lines, and her organizing armature shows thorough study of the allover Cubist-derived grid on which Gorky, de Kooning and many other mid-century abstract painters hung their compositions. Kahn is not, however, formulaic in her use of this proven convention and clearly does not wish to rely on the intellectual cachet of displayed art-historical knowledge. She develops any number of ways to depict space, and allows selected passages to remain somewhat ambiguous as testimony to the trickiness of rendering three dimensions in two. As further contribution to the paintings' tension and immediacy, Kahn employs an appropriate variety of expressive marks within her superstructures.

Kahn's earlier paintings were somewhat lyrical representations of interiors that gradually became more and more fragmented until she made the leap to her current abstracted approach and, in so doing, to paintings of a far more complicated mood. Her selection of visual elements now includes very thin, broken lines that trace legible bits of figures—many and small, as in the busy *Moonlight* (1986), or a single pair of imposing curvaceous legs, as in *The Mirror* (1987)—or toy with perspectival devices. In the latter case, diagonal lines function as receding edges of tables or floors, and also as abstract elements that partition off whole corners of the compositions without casting them adrift. Such a division was particularly confident in the 30-inch-square *Childhood* (1987), a piece that despite its lush surface and small format conveyed deep, open space.

Stippled strokes activate the center portions of many of Kahn's scenes, and for these she sticks to very bright, straight-from-the-tube colors, as though her fervor to get paint onto canvas prevented her hand from lingering over the palette. She bounds these busy sections with big, scumbled shapes in much earthier, more worked tones, producing areas that are in arrangement and surface much like Diebenkorn's, but which in Kahn's case occasionally seem out of place. This might be because while Diebenkorn's organization evolved from tipping simple landscape compositions up against the picture plane to depict expansive vistas, Kahn borrows the approach to render crowded interior spaces; these end up feeling dense and top-heavy. In several paintings, however, she ably offsets that heaviness with a great deal of natural light, reflected on mirrors or seen through windows, and the results are satisfyingly open and inviting scenes. For the most part, Kahn's touch is light, and her solutions to painterly problems are visually and psychologically unpredictable, making for paintings that stay with us longer than most. *—Amy Slaton*



Deborah Kahn: *Dressing Table,* 1987, oil on canvas, 66 by 58 inches; at Bowery.

Pauline Stella Sanchez: *Bottles and Faucet,* 1987, mixed mediums, 78 inches tall (canvas); at Ace Contemporary.

LOS ANGELES

Pauline Stella Sanchez at Ace Contemporary

What Pauline Stella Sanchez creates is genuinely distressing, sensibility-bashing and eminently enjoyable painting—work with a built-in dare to be liked. To produce her monochromatic fields, Sanchez drags literally pounds of oil paint from roughly the center of each canvas to the outside of the support and sometimes right over the edge. This process makes for deeply striated rills of paint that end in agglomerations of a magmalike density. The paintings have the visceral tautness of a rubber band pulled to its limit. These large works often incorporate found objects, either appended to the canvas (as in *Syringes*) or arranged as a visual counterpoint (as in *Bottles and Faucet*).

Sanchez's subject matter has a dark side to it, with the title sometimes cluing us in to her designs. *Pillory* is an oil-on-plywood structure that lies on the floor. One of the two squares that make up the work has a slightly detached rectangular segment at one end, while both squares have a row of castors along one side, implying that they can be set upright, put into use, as it were. Being thick, massive and stone-colored, this construction has more apparent than actual weight to it. Of course, a pillory is an old punishment device used to ridicule miscreants in public (sexual misconduct being a main offense). Sanchez's pillory seems to be lying in wait, prepared to bring about wholesale degradation.

Even more chilling is *Syringes*, a painting bearing a row of 30cc syringes down its center, jabbing at odd angles into the Prussian blue-gray surface. The painting *Faucet and Finger* has a simple line rendering of a slender, spout-like form stretching lengthwise across much of the canvas (faucets abound in Sanchez's work, often affixed directly to the canvas). Scratched into this perfunctory sketch is, just discernible, an equally funky approximation of a pointing finger. The whimsy of this piece provides a welcome counterbalance to the threat of some of the other works in the show.

Before Sanchez's pieces the viewer experiences a sort of esthetic deprivation, the sensuality of their surfaces negated by the non-colors the artist employs. Their utterly banal, gray-hued bulks exude a stale institutional air, evoking hospitals, barracks, prisons. Weirdly neutral, yet vaguely authoritarian, their very drabness makes them engaging—like object lessons on the banality of evil. Sanchez's ability to wring maximum dread from a Minimalist format gives her new work a power all its own.

—Michael Anderson

TESUQUE, N.M.

Carl Johansen at Shidoni

Carl Johansen's recent assemblages, sculptures and works on paper—constituting his first major solo exhibition in many years—continue to display the wry, sardonic wit and blatantly manipulative ransacking of art history for which he is known.

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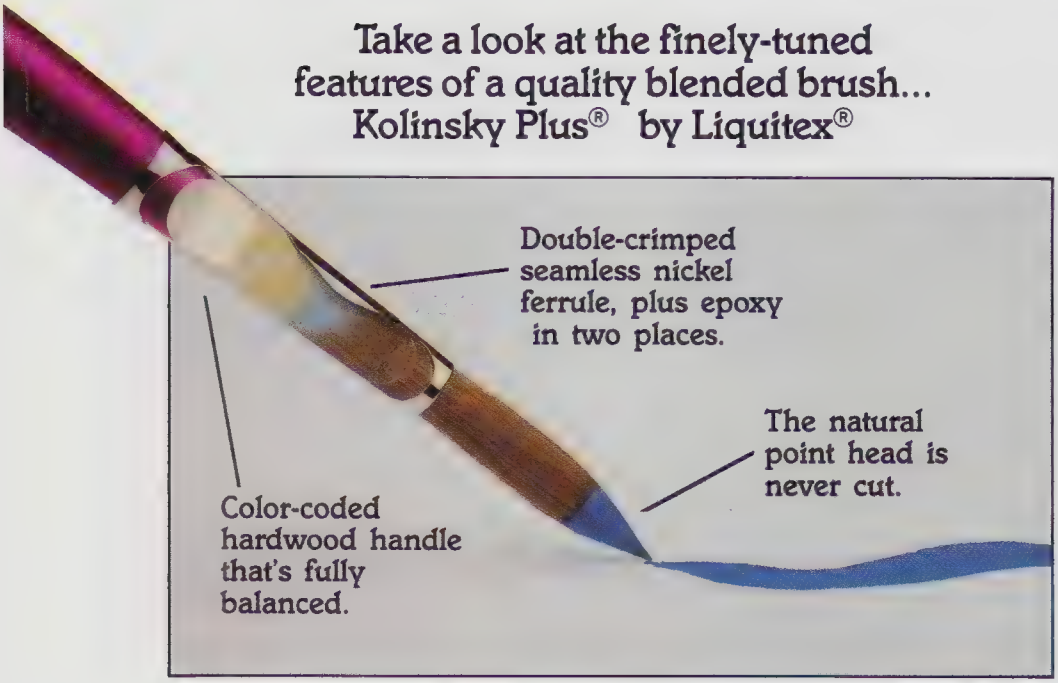
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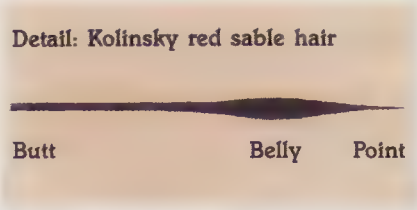

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Playing on a mischievous transposition of existing forms and a disjunction of styles, Johansen pilfers characters and whole passages directly from Picasso and other modern artists, as well as the fractured space of Cubist still life.

Familiar Picasso images and compositional strategies, especially from the 1920s and '30s, show up everywhere: cow skull, Minotaur and horse; forceful sinewy outlines set off by vivid colors like hot orange-red, yellow and fuchsia; a violently surreal metamorphosis of the human form. In *Conquest*, a twisted, broken depiction of a crucified woman, Johansen places an entire section of Picasso's 1930 *Crucifixion* upside down below his principal subject's feet. The figures in Johansen's *The Poet's House* almost exactly replicate the postures of two of Picasso's *Three Dancers*, 1925. Elsewhere, a Beckmann-like face peers out of *The Fool's in Town*; and here and there clichéd elements of the Southwestern landscape—piñon-dotted hills, bright blue skies and rugged horizons—appear less as spatial devices than as satirized emblems.

Johansen's renderings of sexual fantasies are highly refined and graphic—like X-rated cartoons. His works on paper in pastel, gouache and color pencil are tightly constructed and carefully executed. His dense, centralized compositions project from the picture plane, and the figures often seem to thrust out at the viewer by means of the outsize scale of their heads, hands and feet, the exaggerated foreshortening of their limbs, and their sharp contours and shadows.

Johansen's assemblages and sculptures may be seen as literalized versions of his two-dimensional compositions, and are characterized by Surrealist-inspired conjunctions: found objects collide with colorful gouache mini-paintings and massive black shapes. *Ol' Black*, which both recalls and inverts Picasso's guitar constructions from around 1912, combines imitation wood, sheet-metal cutouts and an almost iridescent surface that looks like tar.

Both intelligent and nasty, Johansen's work is plainly about the theft of styles, images and ideas; easily seen as cynical and misanthropic, this art would seem to jeer at the notion of authenticity. It is perhaps significant that Johansen has chosen to steal mostly from Picasso, an artist who has himself stolen freely from his colleagues and art history. As with Picasso, it is the *way* in which Johansen selects and recombines elements to expressive ends that is responsible for the success of his appropriative art. —*Kathleen Shields*

Simon Gouverneur: *Logos*, 1987, egg tempera on canvas, 61 inches square; at Franz Bader.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Simon Gouverneur at Franz Bader

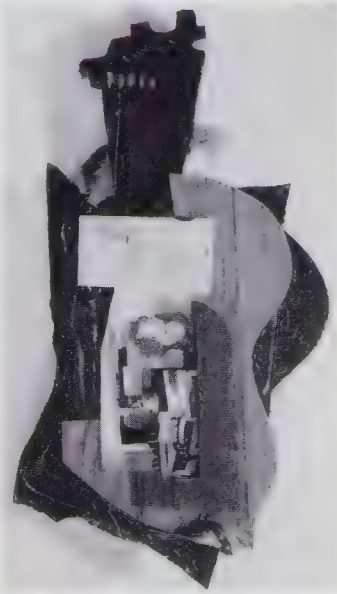
Simon Gouverneur's latest symbolic abstractions are neither overtly mystical nor inquiries into the loss of cultural value that symbols have suffered by overuse. These pictures are speculations about the perseverance of myth, and are populated with visual curiosities that immediately yield an oblique sense of otherness, of meaning veiled in an overload of patterns and simple geometries, all geared to profound yet obscure universalities.

Gouverneur is deeply concerned with the most primal issues of language and with the communication of meaning. Painted in richly hued egg tempera on canvas, the images are as two-dimensional as Egyptian tomb paintings and, like such paintings, are meant to be read even as they are seen. *Vessel*, 1987, depicts a boat constructed of symbolic emblems: a Maltese cross, representing the union of matter and spirit, serves as a sail; a black crescent moon, symbol of the feminine, is the hull. A spade functions as an oar, pointing downward into stylized jagged lines that indicate water, in which is depicted a fish (emblem of the human capacity to probe the unconscious?). Gouverneur builds a kind of "vessel" of meaning out of diverse signifiers—an almost rebuslike structure that is as engaging visually as it is intellectually.

Jester and *Charm* are variations on Gouverneur's primary image, the chessboard, which, for the artist, is paradigmatic of an open-ended system, a universe whose very order allows for chaos and freedom. *Jester* is a straightforward rendering of the gameboard, except that the squares enclose circular hexagrams made of spindle shapes that resemble cuneiform letters. *Charm* contains a lexicon of symbols placed within the chessboard grid: a scorpion, a swastika, spirals, flowers, and fluxes of numbers, letters, stripes and circles. Both works suggest the vast range of possible symbolic and visual connections to be found in any whole comprised of freely associating parts.

Gouverneur has characterized his work as "stiff, generous and dangerous," all attributes of symbols themselves: stiff in their literalness, generous in the body of meanings to which they give access and dangerous in the power that can be projected through them. These pictures are not at all subjective abstractions; they're intended to be objective images formed from a common human visual language. In this respect, Gouverneur's paintings remain open to an evaluation that our present culture lacks the data to accurately make; his metaphysics and our curiosity consequently remain intact.

—*J.W. Mahoney*



Carl Johansen: *Ol' Black*, 1987, mixed mediums, 33½ inches high; at Shidoni.

Review Contributors

Brooks Adams writes frequently on art for *Harper's Bazaar* and is preparing a book on the Belgian Symbolists for publication . . . **Tiffany Bell, Holland Cotter, Eleanor Heartney, Gerrit Henry, Eileen Myles, Walter Thompson** and **John Zinsser** are critics based in New York City . . . **Ken Johnson** is a critic based in Troy, N.Y. . . . **Nancy Princenthal** is an editor at the *Print Collector's Newsletter* . . . **Michael Anderson** writes on art from Los Angeles . . . **J.W. Mahoney** is on the staff of the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C. . . . **Kathleen Shields** writes on art from the Southwest.

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Art and Money

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Strawberry Hill. However warped our view of the Middle Ages may be, our nostalgia for that era and for supposedly primitive, non-Western cultures is a strong sign that we feel bereft in our own times. Our institutions provide only so much acceptance and there are so many of us to compete for it. Look at the hordes of young people who come out of art school seeking the glamour of recognition as artists. How can we understand them—or our interest in art, for that matter—unless we acknowledge that esthetic aspirations cannot be formulated in our culture without formulating, in the same instance and with the same act, a desire for market success across the board, from the review columns to the collectors' living rooms? The entrepreneurial self looks nowhere without seeing a prospect for a sale.

But, I seem to hear, this doesn't quite dispose of the *Irises* problem. Surely economic value occasionally soars to a point where it splits off from any other sort of value, meaning that if we want to look at van Gogh's *Irises* as art, we must put its price tag out of mind. Maybe, but such compartmentalizing tactics remind me of Roger Fry's attempt to see the "plastic beauty" of Rembrandt's *Christ Before Pilate* apart from the "psychological truth" of the painting's narrative.[14] He set aside the narrative to concentrate on what, by his faulty logic, was leftover. I call his logic faulty because by removing one aspect of a painting from consideration he removed the entire work; aspects, by their nature, belong to a whole. Seeing *Christ Before Pilate* as form divested of content, Fry saw something other than what Rembrandt intended. Thus he didn't see the work, nor will we see *Irises* or think about it clearly if we try to purify the picture of the astonishing knowledge that someone paid $53.9 million to own it.

If we are to live in our historical moment, we have to look at *Irises* (or a reproduction of it) with a full sense of the price it fetched and try to see that outrageous number as part of what the painting means now. Maybe we can't do that. If we cannot, the painting will go unseen in its fullness. We will see in its place an image lacking that aspect we call "intention," for van Gogh intended this painting to sell, and it has, ten times since his death.

I hope it doesn't sound as if I am making common cause with laissez-faire ravers and all the other theodicists who assure us that whatever is, is right.[15] I don't say that every price is fair, any more than I would say that every critic's degree of emphasis on form or on content is just. A market is a species of discussion, and any lively discussion is full of extravagances, irrelevancies and outright silliness. What I am saying is that in these matters fairness and unfairness, justice and injustice, turn on the same question: how well balanced is the market's or the critic's treatment of an art work? Does it account for all the work's aspects? Does it bring those aspects into an equilibrium that reflects the wholeness of the work, its unity, such as it is? Balance may not occur but it remains possible. If we think the latest price for *Irises* was thrown out of whack by a grotesque overemphasis on van Gogh's myth, we must also believe, consciously or not, that some price for the painting would be proper. And some price (don't ask me what) *would* be proper, for in our culture art works are commodities, as well as all the other things that they are.

Born beyond the clutches of the market, art must be seduced and prostituted to become a fit object for commerce—this melodramatic story is tattered now and often neglected, but still strong in a way, for it still provides a basis for our definitions of the esthetic. In rejecting the image of art as money's innocent victim, I don't deny that an entrepreneurial esthetic can produce abuses, in painting or sculpture or the marketplace, just as I don't deny that our entrepreneurial culture produced Blake's "dark Satanic Mills" and now expands the oppressive dreariness of the corporate bureaucracies. I agree with antimarket critics that for a quarter of a century the American art world has paid too much attention to money and the crasser forms of power. It's as if we had spent the last 25 years looking at the stars and stripes—and the auction prices—of Jasper Johns's Flags and ignoring the subtler sales pitch of the brushwork.

Those paintings of Johns, especially the monochromes, have textures as luxurious as the exquisitely tanned hides of endangered creatures. Johns gave the anxieties of Action Painting the supple allure of melancholy. His Flag paintings offer death in a seductive mode—the death of an icon, the Stars and Stripes; the death of Action Painting, an all-American style; the death of the New York artist as a two-fisted esthetic brawler. The offering was accepted, Flag paintings were bought, and in exchange Johns received a degree of legitimacy to apply to the account of the new model of the American artist he was bringing forth from the death of the old. He received a larger measure of legitimacy when museums bought his works literally and their curators bought, in a figurative way, Johns's claim to be not the only but nonetheless the most significant descendant of the New York School's first generation.

Meanwhile, the markets, both literal and figurative, for first generation figures like Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock boomed. They continue to boom. Only in markets for things like detergents or toothpaste does the acceptance of one commodity lessen another's chances. Detergents are all alike. Individuals and their works of art are not. The market for distinctive commodities, for emblems of individuals powerful to the point of defiance, is expansive—so expansive that, as we've seen, there has long been a demand among collectors, curators, critics and the general public for images that insist, sometimes belligerently, that they don't want to be consumed. This makes them irresistibly consumable, for we experience our world as a marketplace where the most vivid presences, the offerings most in demand, include artists and art works that make the most fuss, sincere or not, about never capitulating to the market. Likewise, Marxism has currency among Western critics not because it shows a way beyond the mechanics of capitalism but because, with their challenges to that market machinery, certain Marxist critiques take on a particularly salable aura of courageous individuality. Each new Marxist challenge, no less than the most off-putting innovations of Carl Andre or Hans Haacke, is an alluring image of an entrepreneurial self. When we learn to see this not as an ironic peculiarity but as a straightforward fact, we will have begun to get a clear view of our culture and its art. □

1. "There is no greater work of art than a great portrait," said Henry James in "John S. Sargent" (1893), reprinted in *The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts*, ed. John L. Sweeney, London, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956, p. 227. For James's way of handling what might be called the economics of response, the exchange of approbation for meaning, when faced with landscape painting, see "The Norwich School" (1878), *The Painter's Eye*, pp. 152-57. A notable point here is that an observer of James's authority determines not only what degree of approbation to give to works of art, but the amount and nature of meaning he is to receive from them.

2. William Blake, "Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*" (ca. 1808), *William Blake: Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 445, 446.

3. Umberto Boccioni et al., "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters 1910," reprinted in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, New York, 1973, p. 25; Francis Picabia, "DADA Manifesto" (1920), reprinted in *Dadas on Art*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971, p. 166; André Breton, "The Relationship Between Intellectual Work and Capital" (1930), reprinted in *What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed. Frank-

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Art and Money

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lin Rosemont, New York, 1978, pp. 66–69.
4. Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, New York, 1977, p. 92.
5. Barbara Rose, "A B C Art" (1965), reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1968, pp. 294, 297.
6. Scott Burton, "Notes on the New," *When Attitudes Become Form*, Kunsthalle Bern, 1969, n.p.
7. Kynaston L. McShine, "Essay," *Information*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1970, p. 139. See also Carter Ratcliff, "SMS: Art in Real Time," *SMS: A Collection of Original Multiples*, New York, Reinhold-Brown Gallery, 1988, n.p. Organized by the American Surrealist William Copley in 1968, SMS ("Stop More Shit") was a utopian attempt to transform works of art from luxury goods into mass-produced objects available through the mail for a nominal fee. Two decades later, it is difficult to determine how ironically the project's participants espoused its utopianism. Among the contributers to SMS were such gallery stars as Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg.
8. For a summary of antimarket agitation in the late 1960s and early '70s, see Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*, New York, Praeger, 1973. In her "Preface" (1969), pp. 7–8, Lippard wrote that "dematerialization" is "introducing a drastic solution to the problem of artists being bought and sold so easily, along with their art. Not, God knows, that the artists making conventional objects want that any more than anyone else, but their work unfortunately lends itself more easily to capitalist marketing devices." But in her "Postface" (1972), p. 263, she notes that "dematerialization" did not free artists "from the tyranny of a commodity status and market-orientation." One wonders if they wanted that freedom, for, as she acknowledges, artists who in 1969 had looked to her like antimarket radicals were in 1972 "selling work for substantial sums here and in Europe; they are represented by (and, still more unexpected, showing in) the world's most prestigious galleries. Clearly, whatever minor revolutions in communication have been achieved by the process of dematerializing the object . . . art and artist in a capitalist society remain luxuries."
9. Of course the return to the figure was a non-event. The figure never went away. See Carter Ratliff, "Stampede to the Figure," *Artforum* 22, no. 10, Summer 1984, pp. 47–55.
10. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 477–78.
11. See Carter Ratcliff, "Dramatis Personae: Proprietary Selves," *Art in America*, Feb. 1986, and "Dramatis Personae: Rulers of Sensibility," *Art in America*, May 1986, on the interior realm—the sensibility—that must be discovered, mapped and, so to speak, improved for this competition to go forward in a thoroughly satisfying way; in other words, the self competes best on a playing field where, as the only effective player, it holds Napoleonic sway. Thus does the entrepreneurial self, spawned by marketplace competition, become, in private, a totalitarian monopolist.
12. Blake, loc. cit, and "Prospectus: To the Public" (1793), *Complete Writings*, p. 207.
13. Blake saw Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough as England's delegates to the party of artists, such as Rubens and Rembrandt, who "Blotted & Blurred" their way to contemptibly generalized images ("Annotations to Reynolds's *Discourses*" [ca. 1808], *Complete Writings*, pp. 445, 469, 477). "All Sublimity," Blake says, "is founded on Minute Discrimination," and so the "great and golden rule of art, as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art" (p. 453). So far, it could be said, Blake has merely stated a preference for the linear over the painterly. But he claims that the "rule of art" also applies to life, and later in this passage he gives formal matters a moral significance: "What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions? Leave out this line, and you leave out life itself; all is chaos again" ("A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures" [1809], *Complete Writings*, p. 585). Painterly painters try to sell us a false, generalizing picture of reality, according to Blake, who scorns their wares but not the market; he wants to sell us images of the truth, which, as he sees it, requires particulars to be discriminated with a sharp line. These economics of the image have a political aspect. Particulars establish individuality, in things and in human beings, an important point in Blake's view, for only the individual's imagination can grasp the "Infinite & Eternal"—that is, the truth ("A Vision of the Last Judgment" [1810], *Complete Works*, p. 605). Each individual must be free to see the truth in his own way, for none but the vision of a liberated individual can establish truth: "As the Eye, Such the Object" ("Annotations to Reynolds's *Discourses*," p. 456). Only democratic government can tolerate such diversity, he believes, and only free markets can reward it. Politics and economics mix in Blake's diatribe against backward, monopolistic commerce that tries to preserve its power and oppress "Individual Merit" by imposing obscure, generalizing standards ("A Public Address" [ca. 1810], *Complete Works*, pp. 593–94)—for example, the standard of taste that leads to favorable judgments on the "Blotted & Blurred" images of painterly painters. Matters of politics are also matters of pictorial form. Consciously or not, every artist links form to economics to politics and back again to form. Adequate criticism traces those links in all their particularity.
14. Roger Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics" (1920), reprinted in *Transformations*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956, pp. 28–29.
15. See Alexander Pope, "Essay on Man" (1733–34), 1. 289.

Author: *Carter Ratcliff's book on Komar and Melamid will appear next fall.*

Ivan Karp

continued from page 79

current scene. Their works are being acquired at an astounding pace, and not only by newcomers. Some of the collectors buying these works are people I've known over the years who collected slowly in the '60s—bought maybe a Lichtenstein or a Warhol—and are now accumulating four and five examples of a young artist's work at prices that are simply shattering.

Back in the 1950s, the art world was an intimate little community. Everybody knew everybody. On a Tuesday night, you'd go to an opening and find the same people as always and a familiar mentality of alienation. Everyone had to be agitated, distressed, anxious, morbid, semi-violent. That was the atmosphere. It was very enjoyable, very theatrical. And very intimate. An air of buoyancy came in with the Pop art scene. Social events were suddenly full of music and dancing. Instead of heavy whiskey, it was light white wine. It was highly social, but not in the spirit of the present moment. There are contemporary collectors whose names appear constantly as sponsors of various art-world events. I know some of these individuals, many of whom are totally unacquainted with the visual arts culture. It's the social aspect of the arts which fascinates them, and they have a desire to own popular devices—objects which may look like a second-year college project, but which sell for fifty, eighty, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Very distorting. And very disconcerting to serious young artists.

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Posting prices

I don't find it disconcerting to display prices of the works on view. We think we give good value, so we've always posted prices here.

I find that many in my audience are discomfited by the idea of approaching a desk and asking for prices. They'd rather read them on the wall. This is especially important with people who are just entering the art scene for the first time and are flirting with an acquisition. In the easiest possible way, posted prices give them a notion of the zone of art prices. Price should not be an insider's device, a kind of information disseminated only to a selected few.

The audience

Survival is critical in all this. We flourish here, we're optimistic. We have a good time. We love our audience. We get three to five thousand people a week coming in here. Only one percent are collectors. But it's very comforting to the artist to have a large audience around. □

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Woman's Place

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and participation: "Make art history—join the National Museum of Women in the Arts! . . . We continue to need your help urgently—as much as we did when our museum was still a dream you and I had. . . .We're an *inspiration* to women everywhere who are struggling to gain recognition." The museum receives in return an average of some 300 letters a week, about half of which are thank-you notes from women for the institution's existence. One member wrote from Alexandria: "I received your letters and actually read them. They are, although printed by the hundreds, I am sure, personal and caring, and they show your dedication to the Museum. . . . I think our National Museum of Women in the Arts is a magnificent achievement, as well as it is a beginning." It took less than five minutes in the museum for me to overhear a woman, Billie Duke of Memphis, Tennessee, express exactly the sentiments that the NMWA intends to awaken—that she "didn't learn about a single one of these women artists in [her] college art course, even though the teacher was a woman."

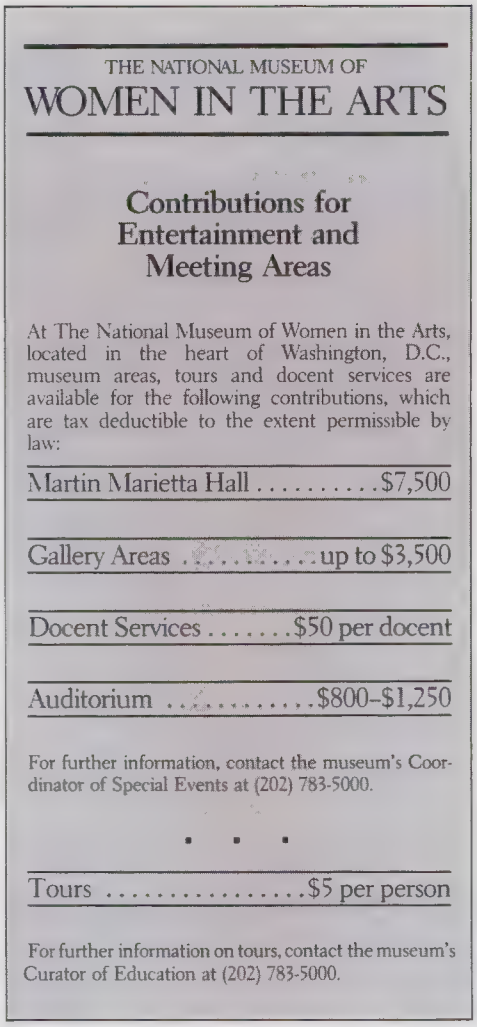
And this, it seems to me, is the real accomplishment of the NMWA: it manipulates women's role in the marketplace, but only for their own cultural profits. How the NMWA will disburse those profits, and for which women, remains to be seen. On the one hand, its recent perfume exhibition, "Scents of Time," catered to a concept of women's art entirely determined by and subjected to commodity marketing forces. Its latest exhibition, on the other hand, presented to the American public for the first time the sculpture of Camille Claudel—work shamefully neglected by other museums, and of great importance both to a history of women and a history of sculpture [see sidebar]. The NMWA could swing either way. It has made concessions to sponsors, but in today's cultural marketplace, no ambitious programming could be contemplated without the money the NMWA has obtained. In its marketing and fund-raising practices, the NMWA is different from other mainstream art museums only in that it is more effective.

The NMWA has attracted so much attention because it threatens to lay bare certain ideological assumptions that most art museums operate on. The art museum democratically asserts high art as a common cultural heritage, and such is the mediatized prestige of high art that we are lulled into credulity. In fact the art museum is an upper-middle-class institution supported by corporate funding and women's volunteer labor. If museums genuinely intend to use their power in an attempt to redistribute cultural profits, we might ask: to what end? The answer is simple: the propagation of their own values.

Founded, funded and sustained in a matrix of cultural power, the NMWA unwittingly challenges its own terms. Against its will the NMWA warns that it is not possible now for gender to be an entirely neutral political issue, however cautious and apolitical its vehicle might try to be. Hoping to institutionalize a moderate feminism, the NMWA has found itself either criticized or praised not only for its stance on gender, but also for assumptions it had never considered.

The NMWA itself may be paradoxical, but close to 84,000 women have chosen its contradictions as the condition of their self-representation. The NMWA reveals the existence of a group of women for whom consumer culture and corporate finance are the avenues, not the impediments, of self-expression. The women's movement now has a center as well as a left. The success of the NMWA shows that the women it represents are committed, mobilized and active. To these women the NMWA has given a place and a voice. For these patrons, both the museum and its message assert the belief that change can come from the center—from within as well as from without. Through the NMWA they have made it clear that, in the cultural arena if nowhere else, they must be heeded. Money talks. And so do the women who wield it. □

My thanks to Daniel Sherman and Irit Rogoff who invited me to give the first version of this essay as a talk at the Harvard Center for European Studies conference on museums. Research for this article was carried out with the help of Rosemary Amatetti, Elizabeth Gilbert, Susan Taylor, the staff of the NMWA, the education and development offices of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Harvard Art Museums, the Toledo Art Museum and, above all, with the invaluable assistance of Deborah Cohen, to whom this article is dedicated.



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1. NMWA press report, 1987.
2. Other statistics include: Whitney Museum of American Art: 4 out of 51 monographic exhibitions held between 1980 and 1986 were of women's work; Guggenheim Museum: 2 out of 52 exhibitions during 1980–86 were women's; L.A. County Museum of Art: 1977–87, women represented in exhibitions, 4.2 percent; National Gallery of Art: owns 2,807 paintings, 60 of them by women.
3. Letter to the NMWA, courtesy of the NMWA.
4. Quoted in Dena Kaye, "The Feminine Eye," *Town and Country* (May 1987), p. 144.
5. Quoted in Sarah Booth Conroy, "The Founding Force of Wilhelmina Holladay," *Washington Post*, Feb. 15, 1987, p. G18.
6. Quoted in Kaye, "Feminine Eye," p. 144.
7. Quoted in Sara Day, "A Museum for Women," *Art News* 85, no. 6 (Summer 1986), p. 117.
8. Diane Ketcham, "New National Women's Museum Makes Up for Years of Neglect," *Oakland Tribune*, July 7, 1987.
9. Cathleen McGuigan, "A Museum Of One's Own," *Newsweek*, Apr. 13, 1987, p. 76, compared the space to Schrafft's; John Loughery, "Mrs. Holladay and the Guerrilla Girls," *Arts Magazine*, no. 62, Oct. 1987, p. 61, made the allusion to early Neiman-Marcus.
10. Benjamin Forgey, "Birth of the Women's Museum: The Building: Retrofitting a Classic," *Washington Post*, Apr. 5, 1987, p. G6.
11. For more on women's magazines and the representation of feminine identity, see Sally Stein, "The Graphic Ordering of Desire," *Heresies*, no. 18, pp. 7–16.
12. See Robert Storr, "Unmasking History at the Costume Institute," *Art in America* 75, no. 2 (Feb. 1987), pp. 15–23.
13. Sarah Booth Conroy, "In the Glow of Givenchy," *Washington Post*, Feb. 23, 1983, p. B1.
14. Quoted in Grace Glueck, "A New Showcase for Art by Women," *New York Times*, Apr. 1, 1987, p. C23.
15. Quoted in Conroy, "Founding Force," p. G16.
16. Quoted in Glueck, "A New Showcase," p. C23.
17. Day, "A Museum for Women," p. 117.
18. Quoted in Conroy, "Founding Force," p. G17.
19. Quoted in Laura Cottingham, "Women Artists: A Question of Difference," *Art & Auction*, Mar. 1987, p. 122.
20. Wilhelmina Holladay, "Personal Statement," issued by the National Museum of Women in the Arts, p. 1.
21. Hilton Kramer, "The New Women's Museum in Washington," *The New Criterion* (June 1987), p. 1.
22. Robert Hughes, "How to Start an Art Museum," *Time* 80, no. 6 (Aug. 10, 1987), p. 48.
23. Quoted in Richard Maschal, "Women in the Arts," *Charlotte Observer*, Oct. 18, 1984, p. 4B.
24. McGuigan, "A Museum of One's Own," p. 76.
25. Barbara Rose, "Women Artists: Pro and Con," *Vogue* (April 1987), pp. 150–52.
26. Norma Broude, quoted in Barbara Quick, "Is A Woman's Place In A Woman's Museum?" *U.S. News & World Report*, Apr. 20, 1987, p. 70.
27. Anne Schwartz, "A Woman's Place," *Americana* 15, no. 1 (Mar.-Apr. 1987), p. 81.

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What Becomes a Legend

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popular poster for the show. The lesser-valued Ravoux portrait, in contrast, had been hidden for decades in private collections, rarely exhibited or reproduced. Sales like these, the *Washington Post* warned, meant "marketing [van Gogh's] pictures right back into obscurity."[18]

In fact, only one of the four van Goghs sold last year, the Tokyo *Sunflowers*, is currently accessible, installed in a gallery on the 42nd floor of the Yasuda Fire & Marine Insurance Company headquarters. Part of a sizable (over 450 works) collection of 19th- and 20th-century art, it can be visited by the public and is available in reproduction. The whereabouts of the other three pictures are unknown, at least to most of us. Christie's and Sotheby's guard their customers' anonymity, and while de Leeuw hopes to coax one of the three pictures out of hiding for the 1990 exhibition, official custodians of van Gogh scholarship in Amsterdam are close-mouthed and reticent about the changes in ownership. Of course, the paintings have not entirely disappeared. They continue to circulate through reproduction and reputation. And because their mystique depends on mass cultural awareness, undoubtedly, like holy relics forced to re-certify their value, however briefly, they too will reappear in public once more. □

Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from personal interviews conducted by the author. I want to thank Dianne Bennett of Hodgson, Russ, Andrews, and Goodyear in Buffalo for clarifying some of the intricacies of tax law, and Douglas Schultz, director of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, for information on indemnification and museum policies.

1. Quoted by Douglas C. McGill, "Van Gogh Price Shakes Art World," *New York Times*, Apr. 2, '87, p. C23.
2. Quoted by Richard W. Walker, "The Art Market," *Art News*, May '87, p. 31.
3. Douglas C. McGill, "Art People: Just an Artist's Dream," *New York Times*, Nov. 13, '87, p. C36.
4. Ibid.
5. For example, Senator Dondero's now infamous attack on modern art as subversive and Communist, reprinted in Herschel Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, Berkeley, 1963; and Meyer Schapiro's defense of Abstract Expressionism, "The Liberating Quality of Avant-Garde Art," *Art News* LVI, Summer '57. Griselda Pollock discusses the filmic construction of van Gogh in "Artists, Media, Mythologies: Genius, Madness and Art History," *Screen* 21, 1980, pp. 57–98.
6. Reproduced by Milton Esterow, "Now Joan, Don't Be Stingy," *Art News*, Jan. '88, p. 22. The title of the article quotes art dealer Carman Messmore's urging of a hesitant Joan Whitney Payson to buy the *Irises* for $84,000 in 1947.
7. "Value," *Christian Science Monitor*, Apr. 1, '87, p. 17; *Washington Post* (editorial), Apr. 2, '87, p. A24.
8. McGill, "Art People: Just an Artist's Dream."
9. Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" (1983), reprinted in *Art After Modernism*, ed. Brian Wallis, New York and Boston, 1984, p. 268.
10. *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, Boston, 1978, vol. III, no. 639.
11. Ibid., no. 652.
12. Meg Cox, "Japanese Firm Named as Art Lover with Big Yen for Van Gogh 'Sunflowers,'" *Wall Street Journal*, Apr. 9, '87, p. 36L.
13. Quoted by McGill, "Van Gogh Price Shakes Art World."
14. "Seul un nouveau venu, sans expérience d'amateur d'art, pourrait payer un tel prix." "Le Tournant des Tournesols," *Connaissance des Arts*, 423, May '87, p. 17.
15. The history of van Gogh's *Irises*, from the time he painted it to its recent sale, is described in detail by Calvin Tomkins, in "A Reporter at Large: Irises," *The New Yorker*, Apr. 4, '88, pp. 37–67.
16. "Sadness in Maine over a Van Gogh," *New York Times*, Oct. 4, '87, p. 51.
17. Ibid.
18. *Washington Post*, Apr. 2, '87, p. 24.

Author: *Carol Zemel is associate professor of art history at SUNY Buffalo. She is preparing a book called* Utopian Promises: Issues of Modernity in the Work of Vincent van Gogh.

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Joseph Helman

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starting to reflect the generally inflexible rules of commerce. The supply side is up, there's more art, and that would lower prices if the demand side hadn't gone up even more steeply, which it has. So demand outruns supply and prices rise.

There are really only about 150 artists, maximum, who produce internationally negotiable works. Let's say they make 20 paintings or sculptures per year. That's 3,000 works in total—it may in fact be half that—to satisfy a growing market of intensely interested buyers. So it's understandable that in the sectors of the market that concentrate on art with a high degree of commercial liquidity, you sometimes sense the atmosphere of a feeding frenzy.

An artist has to make work available to the market, but of course if too much appears all at once, prices slip. Supply is too strong. This can be regulated by qualification, which is where art criticism and curatorial judgment enter into the market. Look, for example, at de Chirico. There's a consensus that nothing he painted after 1917 is any good. There have been recent attempts to widen the range of what is considered good de Chirico, but they haven't been especially successful so far. That could change. The consensus is always changing, generation to generation, even season to season. The hope is that every artist who affected the form and vocabularly of art will always have a place at the table of discussion. The Greenbergian consensus failed, so a painter like Morris Louis is in limbo now. I believe Louis is here to stay, though he seems largely irrelevant at the moment. I assume that his work will sooner or later stand clear and be seen again for what it is.

An important artist is one who has a rationale, a sense of history and of the place he wants to occupy in that history. Then the question is whether or not the artist is working steadily toward that goal. If he does, he engages tradition and adds to it in his own way. Styles are not merely decorative options. By choosing a style or a movement to belong to—Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Pop, New Image—the artist lets you know what aspect of tradition he is taking up.

Painting is one of our most perceptible traditions. An important artist makes it up as he goes along, but in a legible way that tells you who and what that artist is, and how he sees our traditions, our culture. The purpose of culture is communication, an exchange of meanings that appeases the unknown. When that communication breaks down, war breaks out at some scale, whether personal or international or somewhere in between. What makes art important, what keeps the contemporary scene from just being a tulip bulb chase, is the way art sustains communication by preserving tradition and extending it. □

Douglas Baxter

continued from page 85

en an opportunity to have an art experience.

All auction houses are similar, but every gallery feels different when you walk in, and not just because of the show that happens to be up or the weather that day. And galleries also differ from auction houses in that they represent artists' interests. Each collector feels more comfortable in certain galleries, less so in others. Some galleries are more aggressive, others more cautious. The personalities of the gallery's artists determine this to some extent. Certain artists are, what shall I say, intense. Demanding. Some are content with the efforts made on their behalf.

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Douglas Baxter is the vice president of Pace Gallery.

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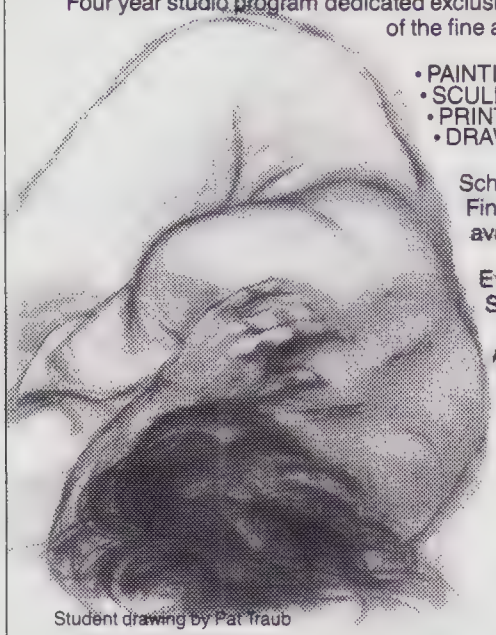

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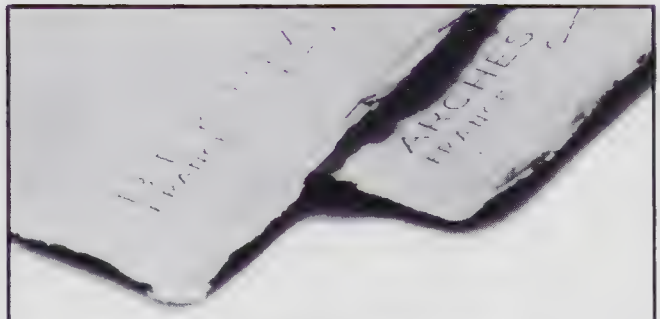

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Museum Stores Face New Taxes

Art museums may have to pay taxes on some earnings of their museum stores if a set of Congressional proposals, recently endorsed by the Reagan administration, eventually becomes law. During the past year, the **House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Operations**, chaired by **Texas Democrat J.J. Pickle**, has been examining the tax exemption of income-producing ventures carried on by universities, hospitals, museums and other charities. Congress estimates the commercial activities of nonprofits at more than $100 billion a year and growing, and small businesses have been registering increasing complaints of unfair competition from nonprofit institutions.

For example, according to the *New York Times*, last year the **Metropolitan Museum** earned $9.2 million from merchandise sales and royalties totaling $53 million. That's a profit rate of 17 percent, more than triple the pretax average for ten major department store chains, according to a recent industry study. Nearly 14 percent of the Met's $68.1 million in operating income last year came from such earnings, up from only one percent 20 years ago.

Since 1950, nonprofits have been exempted from income taxes on their profit-making businesses, provided that the business is "substantially related" to the charitable and educational purpose of the organization. The growth of such operations in the last decade, however, has led tax writers to attempt to specify more clearly what activities are, and are not, subject to tax. In regard to art museums, the subcommittee is considering extending the "unrelated business income tax" to sales of higher-priced reproductions sold in museum stores, to off-premise and mail-order sales of gift items, and to rentals of museum facilities, among other things.

The new tax proposals have not yet been put in the form of legislation, and so are a long way from becoming law—but the broad principle appears to have bipartisan support in Congress. Museums and other tax-exempts warn that the proposals, if not carefully drawn, could do serious harm, particularly in the context of a leveling off of government and private funding as a result of the 1986 Tax Reform act and efforts to reduce the federal deficit. **Richard Oldenburg**, director of the **Museum of Modern Art**, has said that with some of the proposals, "We would be forced to pay the government about $300,000 to $400,000, which is substantially more than all that we receive from all federal sources."

Contemporary Art Center in Prato

Italy's first museum devoted exclusively to art of the '80s, the **Luigi Pecci Center of Contemporary Art**, opened June 25 in Prato, a town on the outskirts of Florence. Directed by **Amnon Barzel**, formerly chief curator of the **Villa Celle** near Prato, and funded by the late **Enrico Pecci**, a local textile industrialist, the museum will feature solo shows of contemporary Italian artists and will build its collection through the purchase of works from its temporary exhibitions. The inaugural show, "Europe Now: Contemporary Creation in Western Europe," is a survey of 33 artists from 10 European countries and includes the work of John Armleder, Joseph Beuys, Francesco Clemente, Tony Cragg, Enzo Cucchi, Jiri Dokoupil, Anish Kapoor, Mario Merz, Mimmo Paladino, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Anne and Patrick Poirier, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, Thomas Schütte and Gilberto Zorio.

New Home for Chicago MCA

Following a recommendation made last year by a state task force, Chicago's **Museum of Contemporary Art** will construct a new, $20-million museum facility and sculpture park on the current site of the Chicago Avenue Armory, which houses the Illinois National Guard. In exchange for the property, which the state has leased to the museum for 99 years at $1 a year, the museum will donate a building it owns on South Calumet Avenue for National Guard use. Groundbreaking for the museum's new home is set for sometime in 1990, after the Guard moves into the S. Calumet facility. The MCA's new 100,000-square-foot, low-rise building will triple its current space on E. Ontario Street.

People

Catherine Lampert, senior exhibitions organizer at the Hayward Gallery in London since 1976, has been appointed director of the Whitechapel Gallery.

Phillip M. Johnson, acting director of the Carnegie Museum of Art since January 1987 and curator of decorative arts, has been appointed director of the museum.

Gerald D. Bolas, director of the Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis, has been appointed director of the Portland Art Museum.

Cynthia Goodman has been named program director, a two-year position, at the IBM Gallery of Science and Art.

Hollister Sturges III, chief curator at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, has been appointed director of the Springfield Museum of Fine Arts and the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum in Springfield, Mass.

Josephine Gear has been named director of the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris.

Jane Bledsoe, formerly associate director of the University Art Museum at California State University in Long Beach, is now director of the University of Georgia Museum of Art.

Andrea Norris, chief curator at the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery at the University of Texas at Austin, has been appointed director of the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas.

Michael Sanden, former director of the Terra Museum of American Art, has been appointed deputy director of the High Museum in Atlanta.

Terrie Sultan, director of public affairs at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, has been appointed curator of contemporary art at the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

Susan Danly has been appointed curator at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Ian Thom and **Gary Dufour** have been appointed senior curators at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Helaine Posner is the first curator of contemporary art at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Formerly she was director of the gallery at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Daniel Walker has been appointed curator of the department of Islamic art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Robert R. Riley, formerly curator of video and performance art at the ICA, Boston, has been named to the new position of curator of Media Arts at the San Francisco MOMA.

Klaus Ottmann has been named curator of exhibitions at Wesleyan University's Zilkha Gallery, Middletown, Conn.

Awards

The **Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation**, which every two years awards grants of $15,000 to emerging artists, recently announced 20 recipients for 1987–88: Julie Bozzi, Bruce Charlesworth, Houston Conwill, Jon-Marc Edwards, Kate Ericson/Mel Zeigler, Joe Guy, Stewart Hitch, Margo Humphrey, David Ireland, Alfredo Jaar, Justen Ladda, Louise Lawler, Susan Lichtman, Dante Marioni, Lorie Novak, John Obuck, Charles Ray, Alexis Rockman, Jim Sanborn and Peter Shelton.

Boston's **Institute of Contemporary Art** and the **Engelhard Foundation** have announced winners of the $12,500 Englehard Awards for 1988. **Photography:** Bill Burke, Chris Enos, Connie Hatch, Chuck Holtzman, Larry Sultan. **Sculpture:** Kenneth Kapps, David Ireland, Dexter Lazenby. **Mixed media and performance:** Paul Kos, Tony Labat, Stephen Prina. **Painting:** Deborah Oropallo.

The Mayor's Awards of Honor for Art and Culture for 1988 were presented by Mayor Koch. Among the seven recipients were **Red Grooms** and **Alfred Eisenstadt**.

New York architect **Richard Meier** has been awarded the 1988 Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects. The last Americans to win the honor were Charles and Ray Eames in 1979.

The **American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters**' annual $5,000 awards go to painters Christopher Brown, James DeMartino, Susan Hauptman, Albert York and sculptor Daisy Youngblood. Susan Lichtman is this year's recipient of the Academy and Institute's $5,000 **Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Foundation Award** given to a "young American painter not yet accorded due recognition."

Obituaries

Lygia Clark, 68, influential Brazilian artist whose work developed from geometric paintings and sculptures in painted wood, aluminum and steel to viewer-participation pieces that included masks and various soft objects. A practicing psychologist, she used her later works in therapy sessions and healing ceremonies. She was included in the 1960, '62 and '68 São Paulo Bienales and had solo shows in New York, Paris, London, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Stuttgart.

Dale McConathy, 48, associate professor and chairman of the department of Art and Art Education at New York University and founding executive director and consultant of Artpark in Lewiston, N.Y. He was also an editorial consultant for *Time*, *Vogue*, *Working Woman* and *Harper's Bazaar*, among other magazines.

Laurence Sickman, 81, director of the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery and Atkins Museum of Fine Arts in Kansas City from 1953 to 1977. A pioneering scholar of Chinese arts, Sickman built the museum's impressive collection of Chinese painting, sculpture and furniture.

William P. Miller, Jr., 39, executive director of the Jamaica Arts Center, where he worked for over ten years. He was also a teacher at Parsons School of Design.

—compiled by Walter Robinson and Cathy Lebowitz

"Still–in a way–nobody sees a flower–really–
it is so small–we haven't time–
and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time."

—Georgia O'Keeffe

Red Poppy, 1927 *Oil on canvas 7" × 9", Private collection, Geneva*

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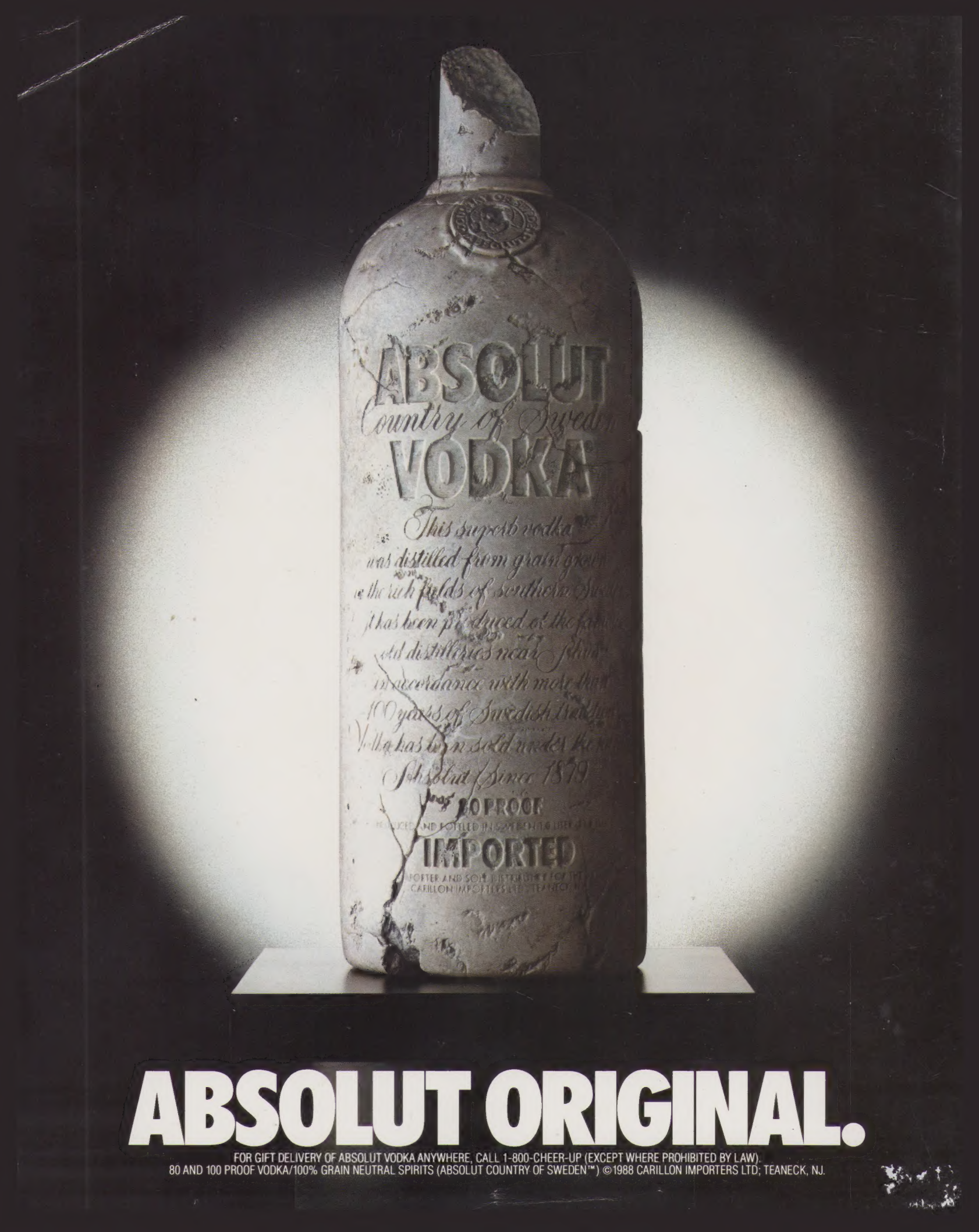

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